

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY AND EMPLOYEE  
ENGAGEMENT IN A FINANCIAL INSTITUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**by**

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submitted in accordance with the part fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of

**MASTER OF COMMERCE**

in the subject

**Industrial and Organisational Psychology**

at the

University of South Africa

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29 July 2019

## DECLARATION

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I declare that “The relationship between personality traits and employee engagement in a financial institution in South Africa” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.



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SIGNATURE

29/7/19

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DATE

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## **SUMMARY**



# **The relationship between personality and employee engagement in a financial institution in South Africa**

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The purpose of the current study was to determine the relationship between personality and employee engagement (EE) within a financial institution in South Africa. A quantitative correlational research approach was utilised and random sampling from a population of 516 identified 200 participants for whom personality scores as measured by the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ32r) already existed as secondary data. A sample of 124 employees responded to the request to participate in the study. The participants were subsequently requested to complete a self-compiled biographical questionnaire and an employee engagement questionnaire (EEQ) as the measurement of EE. Reliability scores obtained in the current study for the OPQ32r was 0.95 and for the EEQ 0.97 (both  $p \leq 0.5$ ), indicating acceptable internal consistency. Results indicated a statistically significant relationship between an Overall OPQ32r Score and an Overall EE Score of 0.186 ( $p \leq 0.5$ ), but only one of the three core personality domains measured by the OPQ32r, namely feelings and emotions, had a statistically significant relationship with an Overall EE Score and four of the six EE subdimensions of EE. Results also indicated that the three core personality domains as measured by the OPQ32r are a statistically significant predictor of EE, predicting 4% of the variance of EE ( $r^2 = 0.04$ ,  $F(3; 120) = 2.72$ ,  $p \leq$

0.05). Although all relationships obtained in the current study were statistically significant, all had a weak effect size and were thus of limited practical significance, indicating limited practical usefulness.

The limitations of this study were the small sample size utilised ( $n = 124$ ) due to the utilisation of secondary data and a survey sent out concurrent to this study, impacting employees' willingness to fill in an additional survey. The fact that this study was done in only one division of a financial institution in South Africa, made the generalisation of results to other organisations problematic. There were limited studies measuring personality utilising the OPQ32r while the EE studies utilised different assessments to measure the construct, complicating the comparison of results. As personality and EE are important constructs for Industrial and Organisational Psychology, it was also recommended that additional research be undertaken to increase the knowledge base regarding these two constructs.

#### **KEY TERMS:**

Personality, personality traits, core personality domains, employee engagement, financial institution, correlation, regression analysis

## IRHUNYEZIO

### **Ubudlelwano phakathi kobuntu kanye nendlela yokusebenzisana phakathi kwesisebenzi kanye neziko lezezimali eNingizimu Afrika**

**Itlolwe ngu**

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Inhloso yesifundo socwaningo samanje kwaye kukuthola ubudlelwano obuphakathi kobuntu kanye nendlela yokusebenzisana phakathi kwesisebenzi kanye nenhlango (EE) ngaphakathi kwenhlango yezezimali eNingizimu Afrika. Kwasetshenziswa indlela yocwaningo eqhathanisa izinga lokusebenzisana kwezinto (*quantitative correlational research approach*) kanye nendlela yocwaningo i-*random sampling* kwinani lonke labantu abayi 516 abakhethwe kwi-200 labadlalindima abahlolwe izinga lobuntu obulinganiswe ngokusebenzisa Umbhalo weMibuzo emayelana noBuntu (*Occupational Personality Questionnaire*) (OPQ32r) okuwulwazi olukade luvele lugcinwe njengedatha yesigaba sesibili. Isampuli yabasebenzi abayi-124 iphendule ngokuthi ivume ukuzibandakanya kucwaningo. Ngemuva kwalokho abadlalindima baye bacelwa ukuba bagcwalise umbhalo wemibuzo ebuza ngempilo yomuntu kanye nombhalo wemibuzo ebhekiswe kuhlobo lobudlelwano obuphakathi kwesisebenzi kanye nenhlango (EEQ), lokhu kusetshenziswe njengophawu lokulinganisa izinga lokusebenzisana phakathi kwesisebenzi kanye nenhlango (EE). Amaphuzu akhombisa ukwethembeka atholwe kucwaningo lwamanje kwi-OPQ32r ayekhombisa inani le 0.95 kanye ne EEQ 0.97 (zombili lezi zinto i- $p \leq 0.5$ ), zikhombisa izinga lokungashintshi kwezinto ngaphakathi. Imiphumela yamanani iye yaveza ubudlelwano

obuhle kakhulu phakathi kwamaPhuzu onke e-OPQ32r kanye namaPhuzu onke e-186 ( $p \leq 0.5$ ), kodwa-ke uwodwa kuphela umkhakha obalulekile kwezobuntu emikhakheni emithathu elinganiswe nge-OPQ32r, yona yimizwa kanye nommoya, lezi zimpawu zinobudlelwano bamanani obubaluleke kakhulu obukhombisa Amaphuzu onke kanye nezigatshana ezine kwizigatshana eziyisithupha ze-EE. Imiphumela nayo ikhombise ukuthi imikhakha ebalulekile yobuntu njengoba ilinganiswa nge-OPQ32r ngokwamanani iyisibikezeli esisemqoka kakhulu se-EE, ibikezele 4% yezinga lokwehluka kwi-EE ( $r^2 = 0.04$ ,  $F(3; 120) = 2.72$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ). Yize zonke izinhlobo zobudlelwano ezitholakele kwisifundo socwaningo samanje ngokwamanani sasibalulekile, kodwa zonke lezi zinhlobo zobudlelwano zonke zikhombise ukuba nomthelela ongenamandla kanti ngokunjalo ubumqoka bazo obuphathekayo buncane kakhulu, bukhombisa izinga elincane lokusebenziseka ngendlela ephathekayo.

Imingcele yalolu cwaningo kuye kwasetshenziswa amasampuli amancane ( $n = 124$ ) ngenxa yokusetshenziswa kwedatha yesigaba sesibili kanye nesaveyi ethunyelwe kanye kanye kulolu cwaningo, iye yaba nomthelela kwizinga lesifiso sabasebenzi sokugcwalisa enye isaveyi eyengeziwe. Udaba lokuthi lolu cwaningo lwenziwe kwisigaba esisodwa kuphela kwiziko lezezimali eNingizimu Afrika, lokhu kuye kwenza ukuthi ukucaban ukuthi imiphumela isebenza kuzo zonke izinhlangano kube yinkinga. Kuye kwacaca ukuthi lincani kabi inani lezifundo zocwaningo ezisetshenziswa ukuhlola izimpawu zobuntu ngokusebenzisa i-OPQ32r kanti izifundo zocwaningo lwe-EE studies zisebenzise izinhlelo ezahlukene zokuhlola ukulinganisa izinga lokwakha, kanti lokhu kudidanisa indlela yokuqhathanisa imiphumela. Njengoba izimpawu zobuntu kanye ne-EE ziyizimpawu ezisemqoka kwisifundo seSayikholoji yezeZimboni kanye neNhlango, kuye kwancanywa ukuthi futhi ukuthi kudingeka ukuthi kwenziwe olunye ucwaningo ukukhulisa umthombo wolwazi mayelana nalezi zinhlelo zokwakha ezimbili.

## **AMAGAMA ASEMQOKA:**

Ubuntu, izimpawu zobuntu, imikhakha ebalulekile yobuntu, izinga lobudlelwano phakathi kwesisebenzi kanye nenhlangano, iziko lezezimali, ukuhlobana, indlela yokuhlaziya i- *regression analysis*

## ISISHWANKATHELO

### Ulwalamano phakathi kobuyena bomqeshwa nokuthatha inxaxheba kwakhe kwiziko lezoqoqosho eMzantsi Afrika

ngu

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Injongo yesi sifundo yayikukuqonda ngolwalamano olwenzeka phakathi kwesimo adalwe esiso umqeshwa/ubuyena nendlela athatha ngayo inxaxheba okanye indlela azibandakanya ngayo nokwenzekayo kwiziko lezoqoqosho eMzantsi Afrika. Uphando luqhutywe ngokusebenzisa indlela yokuthelekisa amanani kwaye kwenziwa ukhetho lwabathathi nxaxheba olungalandeli migaqo itheni, kubantu abangama-516 nekwachongwa kubo abangama-200 ababesele benamanqaku abawafumana xa babebuzwa uluhlu lwemibuzo yesimo sendalo, i*Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ32r)*. Isampulu yabaqeshwa abali-124 yavuma ukuthatha inxaxheba kwesi sifundo. Aba bathathi nxaxheba bacelwa ukuba babhale imibuzo abazenzele ngokwabo, nemalunga nembali yobomi babo kunye neyendlela abazibandakanya ngayo (EEQ), oko kusenziwa njengomlinganiselo we-EE. Amanqaku okuthembeka e OPQ32r awafunyanwa kwesi sifundo aba li-0.95 aze awe-EEQ ali-0.97 (omabini enza  $p \leq 0.5$ ), nto leyo ikhombisa uzinzo. Iziphumo zadiza ulwalamano olubalulekileyo phakathi kwenqaku elongameleyo okanye i*Overall OPQ32r Score* kunye ne*Overall EE Score*, lwalamano olo lwaba li-0.186 ( $p \leq 0.5$ ), kodwa linye qha inqanaba lesimo sendalo yomntu elalinganiselwa ngeOPQ32r, nqanaba elo ileleemvakalelo nesimo somphefumlo. Eli nqanaba laba nolwalamano

olumandla nenqaku eliyi *Overall EE Score* kunye namacandelwana amathandathu e-EE. Iziphumo zaphinda zadiza ukuba amacandelo angundoqo amathathu obuyena nalinganiselwa ngeOPQ32r, aluqikelelo olubalulekileyo lwe-EE, eqikelela i-4% yogungqagungqo lwe-EE ( $r^2 = 0.04$ ,  $F(3; 120) = 2.72$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ). Nangona zazibaluleke kakhulu zonke iindidi zolwalamano ezafumaneka kwesi sifundo, zonke zazinefuthe elibuthathaka, ngoko ke uncendo lwazo aluzange lube lukhulu kwaye zingenakusetyenziswa kangakanani.

Ubuthathaka besi sifundo yaba bubuncinane besampulu eyasetyenziswayo ( $n = 124$ ) ngenxa yokusetyenziswa kwedatha yomjikelo wesibini (*secondary data*) nohlolo zimvo olwaqhutywa ngaxeshanye nesi sifundo, nto leyo yabatyhafisa abaqeshwa kuba babengathandi ukuphendula imibuzo yezifundo ezininzi. Into yokuba esi sifundo senziwa kwicandelo elinye kuphela kwiziko loqoqosho eMzantsi Afrika yenza ukuba kube yingxaki ukuthatha izigqibo ngamanye amaziko. Zazinganelanga izifundo ezilinganisela ubuyena bomntu, zisebenzisa iOPQ32r lo gama izifundo ze-EE zisebenzise iindidi zohlolo ezahlukeneyo ukulinganisela isimo esifanelekileyo, zibe ke zidala ingxaki ekuthelekiseni iziphumo. Njengokuba ubume bendalo/ubuyena kunye ne-EE buzizimo ezibalulekileyo kwiZifundo zeSimo Sengqondo Emsebenzini Nakulungiselelo (*Industrial and Organisational Psychology*), kwacetyiswa ukuba kuphinde kwenziwe olunye uphando ukuze kwandiswe isiseko solwazi malunga nezi zimo zibini.

#### **AMAGAMA APHAMBILI:**

Ubuwena/ubuyena, izimbo zobuwena/zobuyena, amanqanaba obuwena angundoqo, ukuzibandakanya komqeshwa, iziko lezoqoqosho, ukuhambelana, uphengululo lwengqikelelo nesiphumo.

## **CHAPTER 1: SCIENTIFIC ORIENTATION TO THE RESEARCH**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

In chapter 1, the study scientific orientation will be discussed. This consists of the study background, the research problem and motivation for the research, research aims, the paradigm perspective, the research design, research approach and the research method. The chapter concludes with the chapter layout of the dissertation.

### **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH**

Personality remains relatively constant during the course of a person's life and comes from within the individual. The personality trait viewpoint is focused on detecting, defining and measuring particular traits that form personality. No single definition of personality is acceptable to all personality theorists, personality is a pattern of relatively permanent traits and unique characteristics that give both consistency and individuality to a person's behaviour (Mohanty, 2016). Handa and Gulati (2014) referred to personality as the set of individual characteristics that determine the individual's view and response to circumstances. Bell and Njoli (2016) explained that all organisations are inherently made up of individuals, each with their own personality, and that personality thus offers a basis for understanding job behaviours.

For over twenty years organisations have been observing a competitive, vigorous, and fast changing work setting. In this work setting the emphasis has moved from investing in individuals to nurturing them to adapt to the constantly changing environment. This move required new strategies to manage talent and encourage employees to innovate (Ababneh, 2015). Flint-Taylor, Davda, and Cooper (2014) mentioned that the most lasting and constant individual qualities have a tendency to be considered in relation to personality and capability. As such, personality has been studied as a vital predictor of work results for many years (Wefald, Reichard, & Serrano, 2011).



In today's modern world, employee engagement (EE), whether at the organisational or individual level, is at the centre of attention of both academics and practitioners (Ababneh, 2015; Nienaber & Martins, 2014 and Nienaber & Martins, 2015). It has been shown to enhance performance and the competitive edge of an organisation (Nienaber & Martins, 2014).

The needs of organisations to make the most of their employees' inputs have also contributed to the interest in EE. Engaged employees put considerable effort into their work as they associate themselves with their work. Organisations are driven by extreme competition nationally and often globally, which increases the necessity for employees who are committed to their clients, their work and the organisation both cognitively and emotionally (Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010).

The central focus of consideration of many Human Resources practitioners and researchers has been EE and it has been one of the top priorities consistently ranked on the CEOs' priorities lists for numerous years (Martins, 2015). In modern management practices EE is still drawing consideration as a popular topic (Du Plessis & Martins, 2017).

Personal engagement, a form of engagement, was defined by Kahn (1990, p. 694) as "the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". This was supported by Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002) who state that EE encompasses the person's eagerness, satisfaction and contribution to their job. Rothmann and Rothmann (2010) examined factors connected with EE, specifically utilising two models, one of which was Kahn's (1990) engagement model that conceptualised the psychological conditions which mediate the impact of previous circumstances (antecedents) of a person on EE, with results indicating that psychological availability and psychological meaningfulness were positively connected with EE and psychological meaningfulness was the strongest predictor of EE.

Engagement was specified as the individuals' expression and use of their 'preferred self' in doing their jobs, where individuals put their energy into physically, cognitively and emotionally performing their job. By using behaviours that express 'preferred self', the individual brings alive self to the job (Kahn, 1990).

For the purposes of this study, the following definition of EE provided by Nienaber and Martins (2015, p.759) will be used, as the Employee Engagement Questionnaire (EEQ) that will be utilised for this study to assess EE is based on this definition:

“Employee engagement refers to ‘engaged employees’ at both the individual and organisational level, who are fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about their work, and so take positive action to further the organisation’s reputation and interests”.

Engagement has been empirically and theoretically connected to key work results due to the employees' higher levels of emotional attachment to the business (Wefald et al., 2011). Siddhanta and Roy (2010) argued that employees who are very engaged will create a more prosperous organisation. According to Gupta and Sharma (2016), the decision by employees to engage is more effectively driven by non-financial rewards than by financial ones.

However, it has been shown that EE is influenced by many aspects, one of them being personality, which has been conceived as the forerunner to engagement (Wefald et al., 2011). In this respect, Flint-Taylor, et al. (2014) state that the link between a person's work context experience and their personality may possibly be more multidimensional than expected.

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND MOTIVATION FOR RESEARCH**

Since 1994 South Africa has experienced intense social change that considerably impacted organisations, resulting in employees being propelled into work settings filled

with pressures around multicultural employees, due to aspects such as affirmative action and employment equity (Thomson & De Bruin, 2007).

Van Eeden, Cilliers and Van Deventer (2008) mentioned that, theoretically and in practice, personality traits are normally operationalised with regard to visible traits or preferred behaviours. Seemingly, personality traits add to variances in performance of employees working in related environments (Handa & Gulati, 2014). Bell and Njoli (2016) argued that personality defines and reveals how individuals react to their work circumstances and gives a basis for interpreting employees' behaviour at work. Handa and Gulati (2014) argued that the fundamental personality of a person cannot be altered, though an understanding of the association among possible employee behaviours, attitudes and personality traits can assist leaders with a better fit between jobs and employees.

For organisations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Siddhanta and Roy (2010) stated that EE is one of the most important factors driving organisational performance. According to Handa and Gulati (2014), employees are vital for an organisation to succeed, as it is essentially their performance and effort that determine this. Vital measures driving organisational performance such as innovation, profitability, productivity, loyalty, customer satisfaction and quality are products of dedicated, engaged employees (Siddhanta & Roy, 2010).

It is becoming progressively more necessary for organisations to detect and grow their high potential employees (De Meuse, Dai, & Hallenbeck, 2010). In this respect Nolan (2015) argued that top performers' talent and their spirit of entrepreneurship are needed by organisations to stay competitive and pertinent. The fact is that organisations are competing to attract key talent and retain them, while numerous organisations lose top performers to competitors for no obvious reasons (Siddhanta & Roy, 2010). To reduce the risk of unforeseen loss of quality, knowledgeable, accomplished and motivated employees, an organisation must ensure that it is really engaging its employees (Siddhanta & Roy, 2010).

Research by various authors have linked EE with numerous positive organisational results for both the individual and the organisation, for instance reduced employee turnover, increased job commitment, higher productivity, higher client satisfaction, higher financial performance (Martins, 2015; Siddhanta & Roy, 2010). Britt, Dickinson, Greene-Shortridge, and McKibben (2007) proposed that when individuals are engaged in their work, their performance impacts on their identity and a sense of individual obligation for their work performance is felt. Wefald et al. (2011) noted that several engagement measures were significantly correlated with vital work results such as affective commitment, job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Wefald et al. (2011) also found that personality traits such as positive affect, extraversion and conscientiousness were able to forecast engagement, which sequentially forecasts work results. Thus, Wefald et al. (2011) found that personality traits affect key work results through its effect on work engagement.

In spite of the keen interest in engagement, there are still different measures, explanations and theorisations of it. Engagement is a complex construct (Nienaber & Martins, 2014). Nienaber and Martins (2015) called it a multi-level and multi-dimensional construct. Study results related to engagement indicated that there is not yet consensus amongst authors regarding the construct, providing opportunity for further exploration (Nienaber & Martins, 2014). Authors are however in agreement on some aspects of engagement, including that it is an emerging construct, a multi-dimensional, multi-level construct and that tenets of engagement (partially) overlap with other employee-focused constructs (Nienaber & Martins, 2015). EE is gaining international attention with increasing acceptance that engaged employees feel a link to their job which influences their performance in a positive way (Imandin et al., 2014).

Numerous studies (Ababneh, 2015; Akhtar, Boustani, Tsivrikos, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2015; Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012; Handa & Gulati, 2014; Inceoglu & Warr, 2011; Rantanen, Kinnunen, & Pulkkinen, 2013) have investigated the construct of personality and engagement. A study by Ababneh (2015) examined engagement definitions, developed an engagement measure and studied personality qualities and leadership styles, as the two important components of EE. A study by Akhtar et al.

(2005) explored the effects of trait emotional intelligence, work specific personality and the Big Five personality traits on work engagement. They found that ambition, adjustment, trait emotional intelligence, interpersonal sensitivity, openness to experience, conscientiousness and extraversion are predictors of engagement. A study by Handa and Gulati (2014) explored the relationship between two Big Five personality traits (conscientiousness, extraversion) and EE among frontline staff, and found a positive relationship between extraversion and conscientiousness personality traits and EE. A study by Inceoglu and Warr (2011) looked at the affective-motivational state of job engagement and its probable association to employees' personal qualities of extraversion, emotional stability and conscientiousness, and found that engagement is partially a function of the characteristics of the selected employees in an organisation. Inceoglu and Warr (2011) then concluded that levels of engagement could be improved through selection processes focusing on identifying activated forms of conscientiousness, extraversion and emotional stability. Lastly, a study by Rantanen et al. (2013) found a relationship between role engagement, personality traits, and a four-dimensional work-family balance typology.

According to Wefald et al. (2011), individuals with specific personality types are inclined to be comparatively engaged in work, and this affects their affective commitment, level of job satisfaction and intention to exit the organisation. This is supported by Handa and Gulati (2014), who argued that employee selection centred on performance-related personality measures would enhance the likelihood of building more engaged employees. The study by Wefald et al. (2011) which showed that strong correlations between personality and engagement measures are important for organisations, as personality traits could be utilised to select employees who will be engaged.

According to Wefald et al. (2011), there was a need for more research linking personality and engagement. They mentioned that their aim was to fill the gap in literature and investigate the connection between engagement and personality due to the absence of prior examination of possible relationships between engagement and trait like variables.

Although a few studies exist linking personality and engagement (Ababneh, 2015; Akhtar et al., 2015; Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012; Handa & Gulati, 2014; Inceoglu & Warr, 2011; Rantanen et al., 2013), limited research had been done in South Africa regarding this relationship, which could help organisations to determine whether personality could be used to predict the level of engagement of employees. If this relationship is established, personality could be used to recruit, select and develop specific individuals, knowing that they would be or could become engaged employees. The results of this study could also play a significant role in research, team-building, talent management practices, career development, career management processes, counselling, shaping the culture of an organisation, and could especially impact the selection and promotion processes in organisations.

From the background to this study the following research questions and hypotheses were formulated:

The **general research question** is as follows: Is there a relationship between personality and EE?

The **literature review questions** are the following:

- How is personality conceptualised in the literature?
- How is EE conceptualised in the literature?
- What is the nature of the theoretical relationship between personality and EE?

The **empirical research questions** are the following:

- Is there a statistically significant relationship between personality and EE?
- Does personality predict EE?
- Which recommendations can be made for the discipline of industrial and organisational psychology (IOP) regarding the relationship between personality and EE?

- Which recommendations can be made to the participating organisation regarding personality and EE?

The following **research hypotheses** were formulated for this study:

- *H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between personality and EE.*
- *H2: Personality is a statistically significant predictor of EE.*

## **1.4 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH**

### **1.4.1 General aim of the research**

The general aim of the study is to determine the relationship between personality and EE.

### **1.4.2 Specific aims of the research**

#### *1.4.2.1 Specific literature aims*

The specific literature aims of the study are the following:

- To conceptualise the construct of personality.
- To conceptualise the construct of EE.
- To conceptualise the relationship between personality and EE.

#### *1.4.2.2 Specific empirical aims*

The specific empirical aims of the study are the following:

- To measure personality and its three core domains by means of the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ32r) in a financial institution in South Africa.
- To measure EE and its six sub-dimensions by means of the Employee Engagement Questionnaire (EEQ) in a financial institution in South Africa.
- To determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between core personality domains as measured by the OPQ32r and EE and its six sub-dimensions as measured by the EEQ in a financial institution in South Africa.
- To determine whether core personality domains can predict EE and its sub-dimensions in a financial institution in South Africa.
- To make recommendations for further research and for the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology with regards to personality and EE.
- To make recommendations to the participating organisation with regards to personality and EE.

## **1.5 THE PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE**

Practitioners attain standards, methodology and theory in an inseparable assortment when learning paradigms (Kuhn, 2012). These practitioners base their research on shared paradigms committing to alike standards and rules for methodical practice (Kuhn, 2012). Paradigms guide research even without rules, forming part of nature, science, and the research activity and effectively solving acute problems (Kuhn, 2012). Paradigms give practitioners a map with a number of directions vital for map-making (Kuhn, 2012). A paradigm is according to Kuhn (1970) the values, beliefs and methodology common to people in a particular group or community.

### **1.5.1 The meta-theoretical paradigm**

Meta-theoretically this study will be secured in the positivist research paradigm, which supports quantitative research methods (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). Behaviourists use the positivist paradigm to examine science from a 'reconstructed logic' perspective, insisting that there should be verifiability, disregarding self-report



and mental concepts as the research methods (Howe, 1998). The purpose of the positivist paradigm research is that information is proven and discovered independent of the researcher. This is done through measuring or observing of occurrences. Facts were found by separating an occurrence to scrutinise its elements (Krauss, 2005). Meta-theoretical foundations for the comprehension of personality and engagement were theoretically clustered to improve an analytical concept to guide this study (Verster, 2014).

### **1.5.2 The theoretical paradigm**

The theoretical paradigm on which this study is based is Industrial and Organisational Psychology (IOP), which explains and enhances the effectiveness of human behaviour in the workplace (Aamodt, 2007). Within this paradigm an open-systems perspective to organisations will be applied, as the solving of theoretical problems can best be accomplished through an open-system theory. The open-systems theory is where the organisation is perceived with inputs, maintenance areas to behaviours and motives of people who are input transporters to organisations, to outputs and its required absorption by the bigger surroundings also connecting the macro and micro levels of discourse (Katz & Kahn, 1978).

The study will be conducted within the theoretical sub-fields indicated below:

#### **1.5.2.1      *Personality psychology***

The field of personality psychology or personology refers to the study of the human being as a whole, addressing what it is to be a person, taking into consideration aspects such as biology, neurology, genetics, evolution, emotion, perception, motivation, learning and development (Boeree, 2006).

#### **1.5.2.2      *Career psychology***

The field of career psychology refers to reasons and models for organisational career activities related to various career aspects, some of which are personality, interests, career orientations and career satisfaction (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010).

#### **1.5.2.3      *Organisational psychology***

The field of organisational psychology refers to the study of how organisations function in total and how employees function within an organisation, thus studying work at the level of the organisation and its influence on employees' behaviour and attitudes (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010).

#### **1.5.2.4      *Personnel Psychology***

The field of personnel psychology refers to the study of individual differences in the work context, consisting of aspects such as employee recruitment, the attraction and retainment of critical and scarce skills and performance assessment, signifying the connection between human resource management and psychology (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2010).

### **1.5.3 The methodological paradigm**

This study will follow a quantitative methodological approach, which relies on inferential and descriptive mathematical examination (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative approach assesses theories that are objective and does this by exploring the connections between variables using numbered data that can be analysed using statistical procedures (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative methodological approach consists of gathering, analysing and interpreting data and then writing up the study results (Creswell, 2014). This method highlights measurement that is objective and the numerical analysis of data gathered through surveys and questionnaires (Babbie, 2010). A survey gives a numeric or quantitative explanation of a population's opinions,

trends or attitudes and the researcher makes inferences to the population (Creswell, 2014). A quantitative approach is applicable for this research as personality traits and EE are measured through questionnaires while the data will be statistically analysed to establish whether there is a relationship between these two constructs.

## **1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research design refers to the way that the researcher conducts a study, and is described by Babbie (2010) as planning circumstances for data gathering and analysis in a way that will accomplish the research objectives. The research design consists of the Research Approach and the Research Method (Creswell, 2014), which will be discussed in more detail below.

### **1.6.1 RESEARCH APPROACH**

According to Creswell (2014), researchers in social and human sciences utilise one of the three core research approaches which are qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods, while Creswell and Garret (2008) state that research approaches constantly change, responding to the needs of the world's interconnected, multifaceted global societies. In this study a quantitative, non-experimental research design with a cross-sectional survey strategy of inquiry was used in which primary and secondary data were collected for statistical purposes (Babbie, 2010).

The purpose of this study was explanatory or causal in which the relationship between personality and EE was investigated using a quantitative correlational research approach (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). In quantitative research, numerical data are collected to respond to a particular research question (Christensen, 2001). Secondary data obtained from participants who completed a personality questionnaire in a specific division in a financial institution will be correlated with primary data gathered from the same participants who completed a questionnaire measuring EE.

## **1.6.2 RESEARCH METHOD**

### *1.6.2.1 Research setting*

This research was done in a division of a financial institution in South Africa which is registered on the stock exchange and has approximately 516 employees in branches in four different cities in South Africa. The research was done in only one division of the organisation, namely the Health Division.

### *1.6.2.2 Variables used in the study*

The independent variable in this study was personality, which was measured and used to determine its relationship with the dependent variable, namely EE. A correlation coefficient numerical index was used to reflect the relationship between the two variables (Salkind, 2012).

### *1.6.2.3 Unit of analysis*

The unit of analysis for this study was the individual employee who was employed in the Health Division of a financial institution in South Africa. The focus was on individual employees who had already completed a personality questionnaire in the organisation, and these employees were subsequently requested to complete a questionnaire measuring EE.

### *1.6.2.4 Research participants and sampling*

The study population consisted of 516 employees in a financial institution with branches in four different cities in South Africa. A random sample of 200 employees from the Health Division of the organisation was identified of whom 124 employees responded to the request to participate in this study. They consisted of different ages, genders, races, regions, positions, educational levels and years of service.

#### 1.6.2.5 *Measuring instruments*

- *Biographical Questionnaire*

A biographical questionnaire was designed and utilised to collect information on the employees partaking in the study regarding their ages, genders, races, regions, positions, educational levels and years of service. The sole purpose of the Biographical Questionnaire was to describe the composition of the sample, and information obtained from this questionnaire was not used in further statistical analyses.

- *The Occupational Personality Questionnaire 32 (OPQ32)*

Personality was measured with the OPQ32r, a newer version of the OPQ32 (Saville and Holsworth, 2013). The OPQ32 is a quantitative assessment that measures occupational person-environment fit and occupational personality and is designed solely for use in business environments. The OPQ32 measures three core personality domains which are related to behaviour in the work setting. Personality is categorised on the OPQ32 into three core personality domains: Relationships with People, Thinking Styles and Feelings & Emotions. The OPQ32 is a reliable and valid instrument (Brown & Bartram, 2009). Joubert and Venter (2013) also found no practically significant differences between gender and culture groups in the South African setting. In a study by Joubert, Inceoglu, Bartram, Dowdeswell, and Lin (2015) the OPQ32r empirical reliability ranged from 0.67 to 0.92 on the 32 traits. He, Bartram, Inceoglu, and Van der Vijver (2014) also found that the OPQ32r's reliability ranged from 0.67 to 0.92 on the three core personality domains.

- *The Employee Engagement Questionnaire (EEQ)*

EE was measured with the EEQ, a quantitative survey that measures employee engagement concurrently at an organisational and individual level in the South African

setting (Nienaber & Martins, 2014). The 50-item questionnaire was specifically developed in a South African context and respondents rate their responses to each item on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Nienaber and Martins (2015) report that the current scale gives proof of construct validity and all six aspects (organisational commitment, organisational satisfaction, immediate manager, team level, customer service, strategy and implementation) add to the overall construct of employee engagement as defined by them in their study. The questionnaire is considered rigorous, the dimensions have internal consistency and the factor analysis and CFA statistics confirmed reliability and validity of the constructs (Nienaber & Martins, 2015). The reliability according to Martins (2015) generated acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging between 0.895 and 0.951 for all dimensions and sub-dimensions.

#### *1.6.2.6 Research procedure and ethical considerations*

Permission was granted by the study organisation's Health Divisional Executive in Human Capital to conduct the study within the Health Division. Permission was obtained from the organisation to send the EEQ to employees who had already completed the OPQ32r between 2016 and 2018 as part of the organisation's internal assessment process for selection purposes. The in-house Assessment Centre Head of Human Capital Practices agreed to release the OPQ32r assessment results once the 124 employees gave their written permission. Ethical clearance was obtained to conduct the study from the Research Committee of the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa.

With the assistance of the Human Resources Business Partner, the researcher received a list of all employees in the Health division, from which 200 employees' names were then randomly selected to participate in the study. Once the random selection was done, the researcher requested the in-house Assessment Centre to confirm that they held the OPQ32r assessment results for the randomly selected participants. After confirmation was received from the Assessment Centre, these 200 employees were approached through email and requested to participate in the study.

The email contained the purpose and extent of the study, informed consent, and a clear explanation on the study with instructions on how to complete the Biographical Questionnaire and the EEQ. It was also explained to the participants that on signing informed consent, they were giving permission to the assessment centre to release their valid OPQ32r results to the researcher. One hundred and twenty-four employees agreed to participate in the study and signed an Informed Consent Form, filled in their Biographical Questionnaire and EEQ and sent it back to the researcher via email or in a sealed envelope. A total of 124 responses were finally received back from the employees which was used as the final sample for the study.

Written permission was also obtained to utilise the EEQ from Nienaber and Martins, the developers of the questionnaire. The selected employees were given a Biographical Questionnaire to complete while codes were used to match their biographical information to their OPQ32r and EEQ results. The coding was used to protect the employees' identity and confidentiality was upheld at all times.

A timeline was set and the completed questionnaires were gathered by the researcher and collated on an Excel spreadsheet. The spreadsheet was provided to the statistician to compute the statistics for the study.

#### *1.6.2.7 Statistical analysis*

Descriptive statistics, which Van Zyl (2014) explains as summary statistics that quantitatively summarises features of a collection of information, were generated to describe the sample from the data gathered from the Biographical Questionnaire and to analyse the responses to the two measuring instruments Cronbach's alpha coefficients, a measure of an instrument's internal reliability (Martins, 2015) were calculated to determine the reliability of the two instruments, while Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients, which indicates the strength of the linear relationship between variables (Van Zyl, 2014) were calculated to determine the statistical relationship between personality core domains and EE. Multiple regression analysis, used to predict the value of a dependent variable based on the values of two or more

independent variables (Van Zyl, 2014), was used to determine whether the core domains of personality could predict EE. A cut-off point to determine the statistical significance of results was set at  $p \leq 0.05$ , where the 0.05 level of significance indicates that the relationship is significant (Williams, Anderson, & Sweeney, 2012).

#### *1.6.2.8 Measures to ensure validity and reliability of the study*

Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure of personality traits and EE sufficiently reflects the real meaning of the notions being studied (Babbie, 2010). Internal validity refers to the accurateness of statements made about the causal relationship between the independent variable (personality traits) and dependent variable (EE). The researcher used statistics to refer to and measure the relationship between the two variables to ensure internal validity. Internal validity is based on the processes and operations, variables of measurement and choice of design utilised to conduct a research study (Leighton, 2010). The psychometric assessment and questionnaire provided numerical data which were statistically analysed to respond to the research question. A random sample of 124 employees which was representative of the population was used which also contributed to the validity of this study. Furthermore, construct validity was ensured by basing the study on theory and literature relevant to the research study. In addition, validity was ensured through using the OPQ32r and EEQ which are scientifically validated measurement tools.

Reliability is when a specific technique which, when applied to the same object, would provide the same results every time (Babbie, 2010). Measurement instruments with proven reliability were used in this study and the reliability of the instruments were calculated as part of the study, thus contributing to the reliability of the results attained.

The two measuring instruments (OPQ32r and EEQ) have a proven track record in terms of their psychometric properties (reliability and validity) which contributed to reliable and valid data being gathered and used in the current research. The participants' OPQ32r assessment results utilised for the study were considered to be reliable and valid, as the initial gathering of this information from employees was



conducted by a registered Independent Psychometrist under the supervision of a registered Industrial Psychologist who followed all required psychometric gathering procedures.

## **1.7 CHAPTER LAYOUT**

The layout of the chapters in this dissertation is as follows:

Chapter 1: Scientific Orientation to the Research

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Research Article (which includes the Research Methodology and the Research Results)

Chapter 4: Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations

## **1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In chapter 1, the scientific orientation to the research was discussed. This consisted of the study background, the research problem and motivation for the research, research aims, the paradigm perspective, the research design, research approach, and the research method. The chapter concluded with the chapter layout of the dissertation.

In the next chapter attention will be given to a literature review of personality traits, EE and the relationship between personality traits and EE.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the constructs of personality traits and Employee Engagement (EE) will be discussed. The chapter starts with a discussion of the background of personality, the personality traits theory, personality questionnaires based on trait theory and the Occupational Personality Questionnaire 32 (OPQ32r). Subsequently the construct of EE will be discussed. This aspect of the chapter will cover the background of EE, define the construct of EE and discuss the approach to EE in the current study. The chapter will be concluded with a discussion of the relationship between personality traits and EE as contained in the literature.

### **2.2 PERSONALITY**

#### **2.2.1 Background on personality**

The world of work is ever-changing (Baran, Shanock, & Miller, 2012). Currently a great concern and challenge in the world of work is the volatile economic environment with the possibility of a global recession ever present (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). It is thus necessary for organisations to exhibit world-class performance in order to deal with the global competitive challenges that arise (Sahoo & Sahu, 2009).

Personality psychology, although stimulated by academic research, was mainly reborn by the demands of the business community and has been continuously supported by logic and data (Hogan, 2017). Personality psychologists have advanced significantly over the years in ascertaining numerous socially significant facets of psychological individuality (McAdams & Olson, 2010). Srivastava, John, Gosling, and Potter (2003) stated that a range of theoretical perspectives have been provided to conceptualise personality, each contributing uniquely to the understanding of individual differences in experience and behaviour. There are several theoretic definitions of personality

relating to a person's dynamic organisation of the psychosocial systems that determine their unique or differing behaviour in a specific setting (Moerdyk, 2009).

Allport (1937, as cited in Barrick and Ryan, 2004) studied personality construct definitions and referred to the word 'personality' as one of the most abstract in our language, defining personality as the 'dynamic organisation' inside a person, with psychophysical systems within to determine their unique modifications to their surroundings.

According to Coaley (2014), the interest of psychology is to determine the individual characteristics and the way in which these make one individual different from the other. According to Hogan (2017), personality psychology makes the assumption that inside every individual there are enduring, stable personality structures giving form to coherence regarding our lives and our behaviour. Personality differences are a vital part of personality psychology, as a characteristic of individuals is that they can be rather different from each other (Boeree, 2006). To understand a person, it requires the assessment of the individual's differences from others concerning aspects such as behaviour, cognition, personality, intelligence and abilities (Coaley, 2014).

Barrick (2005) stated that researchers recognise that in the world of work personality matters and is a predictor of work behaviour. Hogan (2017) also noted that within the business community many people believe that personality impacts on work-related performance. Furthermore, according to McAdams and Olson (2010), personality predicts occupational success, societal involvement, health, mortality, happiness, quality of relationships and adaptation to life. Lastly, personality affects a person's ability to innovate at work and has vital implications for behaviour in the work environment (Yesil & Sozbulir, 2013).

Personality is observed in two diverse methods, the nomothetic perspective highlighting common characteristics existing in all individuals, yet distinctive in their expression and order; and the idiographic perspective, which contemplates aspects that go into a person's distinctive psychological makeup (Moerdyk, 2009).

Personality is an individual's desired way in which they react to their own world. Even though personality has been studied and conceptualised for decades with different theoretic frameworks, the definition of personality most frequently used is the person's unique difference in behaving and thinking with regards to how they experience their world (Moerdyk, 2009).

People can be described by various features such as their internal state, physical state, social appraisal of their behaviour, activities in which they take part and their stable personality traits (John & Srivastava, 1999). When considering personality, many individuals consider personality differences for instance, traits and types (Boeree, 2006).

McAdams and Olson (2010) acknowledged that the development of personality over the individual's lifetime is multi-faceted and complex. Personality is psychological in nature and attributed to a person (Barrick & Ryan, 2004), and it is lasting and observable in behaviour (Bergh & Theron, 2003). Most theorists (Allport, 1937; Barrick & Ryan, 2004; John & Srivastava, 1999; Moerdyk, 2009; Nettle, 2007; Saucier & Goldberg, 1996 and Servidio, 2015) saw personality as stable over an individual's lifetime. Barrick and Ryan (2004) agreed with this view, stating that in adulthood personality is stable. As a result, the authors stated that people cannot change themselves; they can change their ability to adjust or their ability to deal with an environment that is incompatible, although there have been some opposing views with these statements. Roberts, Walton, and Viechtbauer (2006) stated that personality traits can change in adulthood while De Fruyt, Van Leeuwen, Bagby, Rolland, and Rouillon (2006) indicated that this change could also take place through therapy.

According to Corr and Mathews (2009), there are six personality perspectives, namely the biological, humanistic, behavioural, social cognitive, psychodynamic and trait approaches:

- *The biological perspective.* This perspective sees personality as a window on the brain (Corr & Matthew, 2009). Cloninger (2009) tabled biological perspectives such as evolution, temperament, altruism, adaptation, heredity, sexual jealousy, cerebral hemisphere function and neurotransmitter pathways, with contributors to this perspective being Buss, Cloninger, Eysenck, Gray, and Kagan.
- *The humanistic perspective.* Cloninger (2009) tabled humanistic perspectives such as creativity, self-actualisation, spirituality, flow, freedom, personal responsibility, choice, unconditional positive regard, acceptance, openness to experience, real self, empathy, peak experience, hierarchy of needs and positive psychology, with contributors to this perspective being Csikszentmihalyi, Maslow, Rogers, and Seligman.
- *The learning or behavioural perspective.* Cloninger (2009) tabled learning perspectives such as stimulus, response, conditioning, punishment, reinforcement, extinction, discrimination learning, shaping, situation, generalisation, gradients of approach and avoidance, labelling, act frequency, and basic behavioural repertoire, with contributors to this perspective being Dollard and Miller, Skinner and Staats.
- *The social cognitive perspective.* The cognitive perspective is that personality is reinforced by an individual's place in the world, their varying representations of the world, together with an individual's differences in processing information (Corr & Matthew, 2009). Social perspective centres on the interchange between social relationships and personality, including the degree to which personality characteristics (including traits) rise out of social interaction, the mutual influence of personality on social interaction and culture's role in moderating these relationships (Corr & Matthew, 2009). Cloninger (2009) tabled cognitive perspectives such as self-efficacy, expectancy, schema, outcome expectation, personal construct, cognitive person variable, reciprocal determinism, life

narrative, modelling and constructive alternativism, with contributors to this perspective being Bandura, Beck, Kelly and Mischel.

- *The psychodynamic perspective.* Cloninger (2009) tabled psychodynamic perspectives such as id, ego, superego, libido, conflict, defence mechanisms, attachment, object-relations, Oedipal conflict, fixation, and repression, with contributors to this perspective being Adler, Chodorow, Erikson, Freud, Horney, Jung, Kernberg, Klein, Kohut, Sullivan and Westen.
- *The trait perspective.* Cloninger (2009) tabled trait perspectives such as trait, type, factors, facet, Extraversion, Emotional Stability or Neuroticism, with contributors to this perspective being Allport, Cattell, McCrae and Costa.

All of these personality perspectives have over time developed with contributions from key researchers and theorists, each having varying approaches towards the universal theory of personality. These perspectives guide the practitioners' interventions implemented and the researchers' observations and yet at times these perspectives influence one another (Cloninger, 2009).

In this study the personality trait approach to personality (Corr & Mathews, 2009) will form the basis of the research because the trait approach to personality forms the foundation of the psychometric method to personality study (van der Linde, 2005).

### **2.2.2 Personality traits theory**

Regarding the trait approach to personality, Blignaut and Ungerer (2014) stated that personality traits are described in several different ways even though they are key constructs of personality.

Bouchard and Loehlin (2001) indicated that historically, the trait approach to personality research was formulated by Allport (1937), Murray (1938), Cattell (1943), and Goldberg (1981). Numerous personality researchers (Allport, 1937; Amir, Naz,

Hafeez, Ashfaq, & Dogar, 2014; Blignaut & Ungerer, 2014; Boeree, 2006; Bouchard & Loehlin, 2001; Cattell, 1943; Coaley, 2014; Furnham, 1997; Goldberg, 1981; He, Bartram, Inceoglu, & Van de Vijver, 2014; John & Srivastava, 1999; King, George, & Hebl, 2005; Moerdyk, 2009; Murray, 1938; Roberts, Kuncel, Shiner, Caspi, & Goldberg, 2007; Saucier & Goldberg, 1996; Servidio, 2015; Tett & Guterman, 2000; Van Der Linde, 2005; Zhao, Dong, Wu, Li, Su, Xia, Zheng, & Guo, 2018) have conducted studies or literature reviews on the traits of personality. Wood, Joseph, and Maltby (2009) mentioned that personality traits have been one of the most studied aspects of personality through the past 50 years. This was supported by Bouchard and Loehlin (2001), who stated trait theorists have pursued the measurement of personality constructs more robustly than other personality theorists. McAdams and Olson (2010) indicated that currently most personality psychologists see personality traits as the elementary part and basis of psychological individuality, while Pervin, Cervone and Olivier (2005) argued that the fundamental building blocks of personality are traits.

Academics generally agreed that personality traits exist as part of a grouping of traits and not in isolation (Blignaut & Ungerer, 2014). In this respect Masoga (2013) stated that personality is made up of varying degrees of traits or characteristics that individuals have.

Blignaut and Ungerer (2014) stated that although personality traits are key constructs of personality, they are often described in several different ways. This was supported by Wolff and Kim (2012), who indicated that there are various typologies of personality traits in existence. Zhao et al. (2018) argued that personality traits are the elementary characteristics that determine the behaviour of a person. McAdams and Olson (2010) referred to personality across the course of an individual's life as multi-layered and complex. McAdams and Olson (2010) indicated that personality variables are strong predictors of behaviour, particularly when behaviour is summed up over time and across different situations. Roberts et al. (2007) stated in their review that particular personality traits predict vital life outcomes, such as divorce, mortality and success in work. McAdams & Olson (2010) indicated that personality traits outline a dispositional

sketch of psychological individuality. Personality traits describe the person's differences in their emotions, cognition and behaviour (Alkiş & Temizel, 2018), their style of behaviour (Moerdyk, 2009), and characterise reasonably stable characteristics (Servidio, 2015), while being able to grow over a lifetime according to normative patterns (Hudson, Roberts, & Lodi-Smith, 2012). Gerber, Huber, Doherty and Dowling (2012) stated that research found that personality traits are highly stable throughout one's lifetime and are strongly influenced by genetics.

Personality traits describe stable patterns in the manner in which a person thinks, feels and behaves (Pervin et al., 2005). Tett and Guterman (2000, p.398) described personality traits as "intraindividually consistent and interindividually distinct propensities to behave in some identifiable way in light of situational demands". This was supported by Coaley (2014), who stated that personality traits could be valuable in forecasting how a person is most likely to act most of the time. Gerber et al., (2012) indicated that research showed that traits impact an immense range of behavioural and attitudinal outcomes.

According to Tett and Burnett (2003), personality traits are important for the world of work, as they reveal five core points applicable to the prediction of performance and the selection of employees:

- One can forecast future behaviour based on past behaviour, as a person shows within-person consistency.
- The individual differences of between-person uniqueness generate the necessity to ascribe personality to a particular person being employed instead of another.
- Understanding personality triggers is important for comprehending personality's role in the work setting, as personality is hidden potential inherent in a person.



- Personality is seen by what we observe individuals doing, thus interpretations of personality are inferred from overt behaviour.
- Understanding the expression of personality is reliant on the context in which it is manifested.

Cherry (2018) stated that the trait approach to personality focuses on detecting, defining and measuring the particular traits that form personality. This view was supported by Coaley (2014) who stated that the differences between individuals need to be detected and measured in order to determine the unique characteristics of an individual. Personality is also regularly referred to as traits that are measurable (Van Der Linde, 2005). As such, personality assessment is commonly done through trait-based approaches seeking to describe an individual's personality by means of generally established traits (Moerdyk, 2009; Rothman & Coetzer, 2003). Personality traits are typically assessed by means of personality instruments (Moerdyk, 2009).

### **2.2.3 Personality questionnaires based on trait theory**

Measurement has progressed from the study of a person's differences in human psychology. This progression moved from wanting to be more unbiased in its explanations of individuals, and establishing whether what exists is bad or good, to being more concerned with establishing what exists and objectively measuring the ways in which people differ (Coaley, 2014). Personality assessments play a vital part in psychological practice and science by revealing an individual's nature and their disposition to behave in a certain way (Weiner & Greene, 2017).

Personality psychologists are intent on finding a scientific taxonomy to study specified realms of personality characteristics, as a taxonomy will divide the phenomenon into systematic groups and provide a standard scientific language that enables the collection of empirical findings (Saucier & Srivastava, 2015). According to Barrick and Mount (1991), many scholars have studied the validity of personality measures for employee recruitment purposes, and psychologists have joined in with studies

regarding the construct and structure of personality. Psychometric instruments are typically used to assess aptitude and personality in order to find potential individuals possessing desirable personality traits to employ in an organisation (Handa & Gulati, 2014). These psychometric instruments measure various aspects, such as a person's ability to think creatively, make decisions and adjust to change, as well as their attitude concerning their task prioritisation styles, their work and possibly their behaviour towards individuals like colleagues, clients and leaders (Handa & Gulati, 2014). Weiner and Greene (2017) indicated that personality assessment is made up of techniques to detect what individuals are like and how they probably will think, feel, and act.

Hogan (2017) noted that for personality psychology, the main research method is personality assessment. Boeree (2006) explained that personality assessments are constructed by psychologists to measure personality traits. Weiner and Green (2017) indicated that the measures of personality characteristics aid researchers in examining individual differences, while personality assessment aids practitioners in discerning a person's behavioural predispositions and frame of mind. According to Van der Linde (2005) a number of psychometric assessments have been developed to measure the individual personality traits that a person possesses. Examples are the Fifteen Factor Questionnaire (15FQ+) (Psytech, 2000), and the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ32) (Saville and Holsworth, 2013). In this study the OPQ32r was used to measure personality.

## **2.3 EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

### **2.3.1 Background on Employee Engagement**

For organisations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, EE is considered one of the most vital aspects driving employee performance (Gupta & Sharma, 2016), and organisational performance (Gupta & Sharma, 2016; Sahoo & Sahu, 2009; Siddhanta & Roy, 2010). In an era where technology is rapidly changing, and with globalisation and privatisation, there has been a more intensified awareness on engagement (Nienaber

& Martins, 2014; Sahoo & Sahu, 2009). With the resultant challenges from global competitiveness and privatisation, many organisations see engagement as a strong source of sustainable competitive advantage (Sahoo & Sahu, 2009).

Although EE has been shown to be vital for individual and organisational performance (Nienaber & Martins, 2014; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Popli and Rizvi, 2016; Sahoo and Sahu, 2009; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011; Shuck & Wollard, 2010), EE research is still emerging and fairly new (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). In this respect Sahoo and Sahu (2009) stated that currently organisations consider and treat staff as more than merely employees, building really great relationships with them, recognising their potential and talent while providing enriching work experiences. Gupta and Sharma (2016) argued that EE is considered to be very important for achieving competitive business results in the present unstable economic climate, as it ensures that individuals put effort into their behaviour towards the company. However, EE is not seen as a specific or temporary state, but as a more prevalent and persistent affective cognitive state that is not centred on any specific behaviour, person, event or object (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002).

Numerous research practices and organisations identified engagement as adding to the organisation's sustainable competitive advantage (Nienaber & Martins, 2014; Sahoo & Sahu, 2009), where Macey and Scheider (2008) denoted that having employees who are engaged may well be crucial to achieving competitive advantage, as it is not easy to replicate and produce a workforce that is engaged. This view was supported by Sahoo and Sahu (2009), who stated that the first thing to impact the productivity of an organisation is when an employee is not purposefully engaged in their own work.

Globally EE has become a 'buzzword' and a powerful basis for organisations to gain a competitive edge, as the construct has gained significance as many antecedents of EE are recognised as indirectly or directly proportional to the organisation's profitability (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). EE is considered a winning recipe for building excellence in the organisation and a fundamental mechanism to foster a high-performance culture

that drives organisational success (Sahoo & Sahu, 2009). EE has been connected to organisational success, where when employees are engaged, they are capable, eager and prepared to contribute their best effort to assist in the attainment of organisational goals (Gupta & Sharma, 2016).

Consulting organisations and scholars have in their research provided evidence that substantiates the positive results of engagement (Popli & Rizvi, 2016). Gupta & Sharma (2016) found strong literature support that organisations that are constantly associated with highly engaged employees will have organisation results such as high organisational performance, productivity, customer satisfaction and retention. This was validated by Popli and Rizvi (2016) who noted in their study that there is enough research claiming that EE strongly connects with business success on an individual and organisational level. EE yields numerous positive outcomes; included in these are customer loyalty and satisfaction, productivity, retention and profitability (Popli and Rizvi, 2016). Popli and Rizvi (2016) indicated that EE has been identified as a core strategy for the organisation to succeed in the present globally competitive setting where growth opportunities are slower. Jain and Ansari (2018), also concluded in their study that EE is an influential element to gain organisational growth, stability and success and that many organisations have invested time, money and effort into increasing EE levels.

Gupta and Sharma (2016) mentioned in their study that there is a clear indication that EE can be correlated with business performance, as it is measurable. Macey and Schneider (2008) stated that EE is used by researchers and specialists to communicate with their customers, though the construct at varying times refers to psychological traits, states, behaviours, their effect and antecedents. Engagement has been referred to as a number of attitudes and behavioural results or in terms of conditions that give rise to engagement. Engagement is seen as a momentary state that varies over a period of time or a central trait of an individual's personality. A substantial number of researchers propose that engagement is a moment by moment state of motivation including physical effort and psychological arousal (Whittington,

Meskelis, Asare, & Beldona, 2017) rather than it being a stable trait that signifies a predisposition to live by means of enthusiasm (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

In reviewing the literature on EE, this researcher found that the construct of engagement, EE and work engagement are often used interchangeably, which can cause confusion. The current research reinforced what Nienaber and Martins (2014) found in their study that EE and work engagement are used interchangeably by many specialists and academics.

Although scholars initially responded slowly to studying EE, over the past decade there has been a renewed focus on EE and its effect on organisational functioning (Popli & Rizvi, 2016). As EE is established as an important factor in organisations for various reasons stated in the background, the researcher determined to explore engagement, work engagement and the definition of EE further to understand it in more depth.

### **2.3.2 Defining the construct of Employee Engagement**

Although the construct of EE has become increasingly popular in the past twenty years (Gupta & Sharma, 2016), Kompaso and Sridevi (2010) stated that to date, there is no generally accepted definition of EE and Shuck and Wollard (2010) argued that it is still conceptualised and defined in an inconsistent way. This is supported by Gupta and Sharma (2016), who stated that the term EE is too loosely defined. Shuck and Wollard (2010) identified aspects of inconsistency and consistency in the EE definitions and found that researchers agreed that EE is about adaptive behaviour resolutely centred on exceeding or meeting organisational results. Although the construct of EE has been described as compelling (Macey & Schneider, 2008) definitions are vague, with more than one meaning and the measurements thereof are under-developed (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Nienaber & Martins, 2014).

Bakker (2011) stated that there are numerous definitions of engagement and referred to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) as the most frequently used one of work engagement (a fulfilling, positive and active work-related state of mind characterised by absorption,

dedication and vigour). Bakker (2011) referred to engagement and work engagement within the same context. Ariani (2013) mentioned that engagement is basically a motivational construct signifying the active allocation of the individuals' resources to perform the role task, as documented by Christian, Garza, and Slaughter (2011). Christian et al., (2011) stated the exact same explanation for work engagement. Ariani (2013) referred to employee engagement as the best description of a multidimensional motivational construct replicating the investment of a person's cognitive, emotional and physical energy into full performance. Rich (2010) had noted that engagement is when employees harness themselves in active and full work role performance by driving their energy into cognitive, emotional and physical labour. Bakker (2011) referred to work engagement as not being the same as motivation, as it also refers to affect (vigour), cognition (absorption) and motivation (dedication) where Saks (2006) had referred to engagement involving the active use of emotions, cognition and behaviour.

Schaufeli and Salanova (2011) pointed out that the two constructs of EE and work engagement allude to different things such as work engagement refers to the persons relationship with their work, and EE includes the persons relationship with their organisation and occupational role. Ho Kim, Park, and Kwon (2017) stated that various researchers developed the construct of engagement to identify various viewpoints and forms of relationships such as job engagement, work engagement and organisational engagement. One such definition is by Schaufeli et al. (2002), who defined engagement as a work-related state of mind that is positive, fulfilling and characterised by absorption, dedication and vigour. Ho Kim et al. (2017) furthermore indicated that the majority of researchers follow the construct and measurement of work engagement developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) also referred to engagement as a pervasive and persistent affective–cognitive state that is not concentrated on any specific event, individual, behaviour or object.

Personal engagement was originally defined as the concurrent expression and employment of an individual's 'preferred self' in task behaviours that endorse connections to active full role performance, personal presence and work. EE was first

referred to as psychological conditions of personal disengagement and engagement at work setting. Kahn (1990, p. 694) went on to define it as “the harnessing of organisation members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances”. Implying that EE is connecting employees to their roles at work and if engaged they will contribute to their work in doing their job offering their physical, cognitive and emotional contributions. Engagement also differs depending on the resources the individuals think they have at their disposal (Kahn, 1990).

The next development in the conceptualisation of EE was when EE was defined as positive scores on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Following this, Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) described EE as a positive, persistent affective motivational state of fulfilment in employees who are characterised by high levels of pleasure and activation. Harter et al. (2002, p.269) defined EE as the “individual’s involvement and satisfaction with, as well as enthusiasm for work”, where Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004) described it as the employee’s positive attitude to the organisation and its values. Wellins and Concelman (2005) referred to it as the illusory force motivating employees to higher performance levels, including employee attitudes towards their organisation and jobs. Lucey, Bateman, and Hines (2005) described it as how every person connects to the clients and company. In a definition by Saks (2006, p. 602) it was referred to as “a distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional and behavioural components that are associated with individual role performance”, while Czarnowsky (2008) referred to engaged employees as those who are mentally and emotionally invested in their work, that contribute to their employer’s success. Macey and Schneider (2008) mentioned that common to the definitions of EE is the idea that it has both behavioural and attitudinal components, as it has an organisational purpose and predicts focused energy, enthusiasm, commitment and involvement. A more recent definition of EE is by Shuck and Wollard (2010, p. 103), who stated that EE is “an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioural state directed toward desired organisational outcomes”. Schaufeli and Salanova (2011) also noted that EE is a broad construct which may

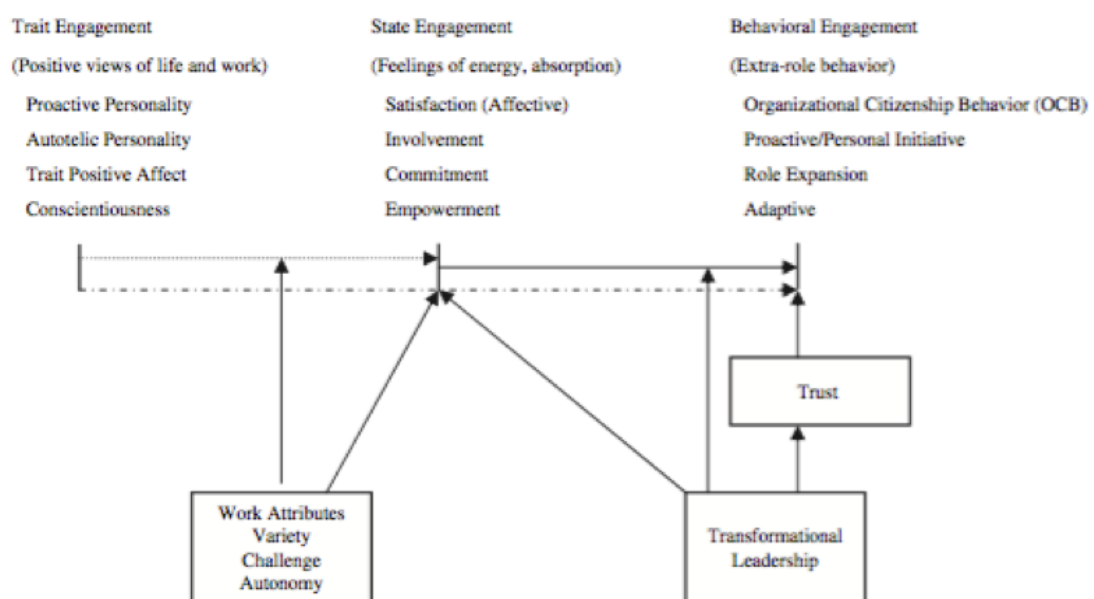
include relationships with employees' occupational or professional role and their organisation.

Lastly, Nienaber, and Martins (2015) referred to EE as employees who are enthusiastic and fully engrossed in their work, thus taking positive action to further the organisation's interests and reputation. For the purpose of this study this definition of EE will be used.

### 2.3.3 The approach to Employee Engagement in the current study

Nienaber and Martins (2014) developed an EE measurement instrument and framework based on existing EE theory, tailored for the South African setting and based on Macey and Schneider's (2008) proposed framework.

*Figure 2.1: Framework for understanding the elements of employee engagement*



Source: Macey and Schneider (2008, p. 6)

In Figure 2.1, Macey and Schneider (2008) distinguished between psychological state engagement, trait engagement and behavioural engagement and defined these in



their framework. The effects of leadership and job features were also proposed as moderators of these three aspects of engagement and as core effects on behavioural and state engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008):

- Psychological state engagement is described as an antecedent of behavioural engagement defined in terms of either discretionary effort, or a specific form of extra-role or in-role behaviour or effort.
- Trait engagement is termed as the disposition or orientation to experience the world from a particular vantage point.
- Behavioural engagement is defined in terms of role, expansion, personal initiative, proactive behaviour and behaviour that gives attention to a broader array of tasks than is usual or typical.

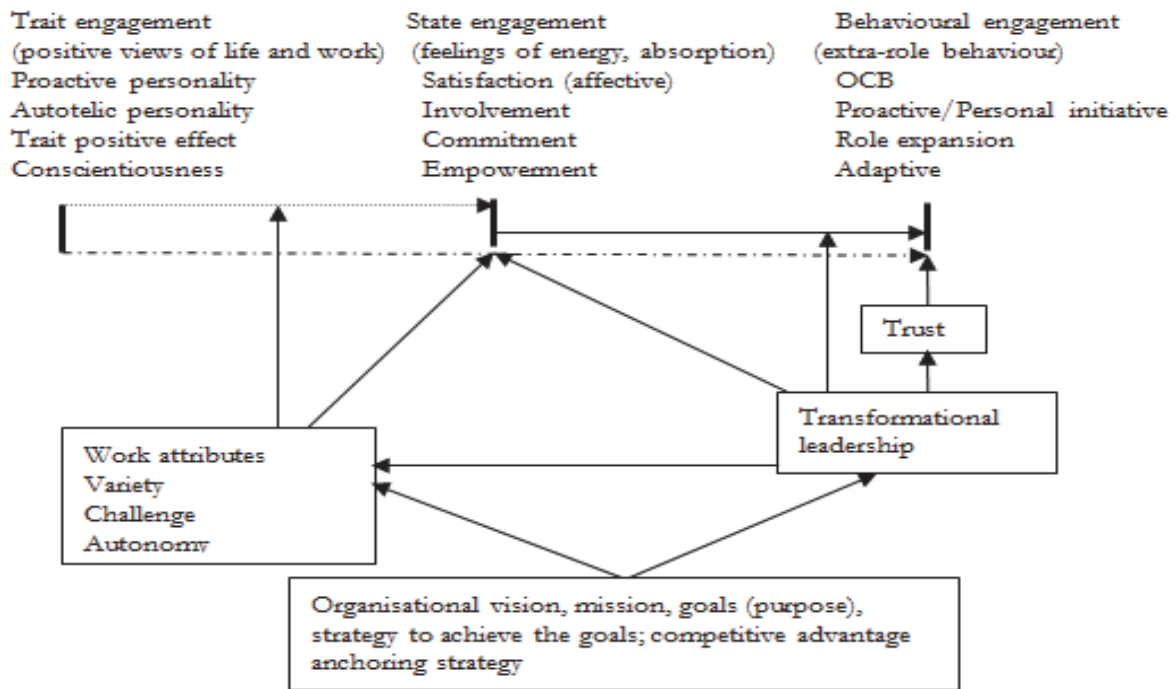
The Macey and Schneider (2008) framework showed that the nature of work and the conditions of the work environment have a combination of indirect and direct effects on behavioural and state engagement. The framework also showed that work has indirect effects as a moderator of the relationship between state engagement and trait engagement and a direct effect on state engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008). This framework focused on low to high positive valence and subscribes to engagement described both behaviourally and attitudinally (Macey & Schneider, 2008).

The framework of the Employment Engagement Questionnaire (EEQ) in Figure 2.2 below developed by Nienaber and Martins (2014) is explained as follows:

- It is made up of seven components representative in the individual level, the team or department and the organisational level.

- The levels consist of the following components - individual level (psychological trait, state and behavioural engagement); team or department level (leadership, trust, work); organisational level (organisational mission, vision, goals, strategy, purpose and competitive advantage to achieve organisational goals).

Figure 2.2: An adapted diagram of Macey and Schneider (2008, p.6)



Source: Nienaber and Martins (2014, p. 489)

- The questionnaire demonstrates the consequences of engagement (behavioural engagement); and antecedents of engagement (work characteristics, leadership, trait engagement, strategy, goals, trust and organisational vision, mission and competitive advantage) that impact organisational performance.
- The antecedents impact engagement, which has an influence on consequences and as a result on organisational performance.

Nienaber and Martins (2015) validated the EEQ which covers six factors contributing to the overall construct of EE as per their definition. These six factors are customer service; strategy and implementation; team level; immediate manager; organisational satisfaction; and organisational commitment. They also acknowledged that the measurement model put forward engagement as a construct that is multi-dimensional (Nienaber & Martins, 2015).

In this study the EEQ will be used to measure EE in a financial institution in South Africa.

## **2.4 THEORETICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONALITY AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT**

In a study that conducted literature reviews on EE and ten pilot interviews with professionals, De Mello e Souza Wildermuth and Pauken (2008) found that individual personality traits (locus of control, resilience, self-esteem, neuroticism, active coping style, self-esteem, and extraversion), the job itself (level of challenge, meaningfulness, and the extent of control the employee has on the job), the environment (the quality of the workplace relationships, work-life balance, and congruency between organisational and individual values) and leadership (integrity and vision) are all linked to EE.

De Mello e Souza Wildermuth and Pauken (2008) reviewed features of engaging jobs and individual personality traits and found that engaged individuals are more likely to exhibit high self-esteem, internal locus of control, hardiness, active coping style, high extraversion and low neuroticism. They found that increasing engagement is a long-term plan and that an engagement-friendly culture respects individuals, values the variety of talented employees and inspires employees to go after an exciting and shared future vision.

Jain and Ansari (2018) conducted a study across different product manufacturing businesses in India on whether the perception of organisational politics affects the job

and work engagement levels of employees and whether different personality traits moderate the relationship. They concluded that a perception of organisational politics exists between employees working in different organisations, which has a negative relationship with organisational engagement and work. They also concluded that certain personality traits act as moderators and affect engagement levels.

A study done in various industries in South Africa endeavoured to develop and test a model of personality traits and work-life balance as predictors of EE. The results showed a significant relationship between the variables, particularly revealing that positive home-work interaction and positive work-home interaction appeared to be correlated stronger to engagement than personality traits. In addition, the results of the structural equation modelling confirmed that the interaction of three personality traits, specifically, agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability and two of the work-life balance constructs, namely, positive home-work interaction and positive work-home interaction, positively and significantly predicted EE (Moshoeu, 2017).

In a study by Steger, Littman-Ovadia, Miller, Menger, & Rothmann (2013) a positive correlation between affective disposition, meaningful work and work engagement was found, though a difference was found in the relationship between these depending on the degree to which the person saw their work as meaningful.

A study explored the relationships between personality traits and EE among paraprofessionals and human services professionals. The study results indicated that two personality traits (conscientiousness and extraversion) are significant predictors of engagement and were positively correlated with engagement (De Mello e Souza Wildermuth, 2008).

Though the researcher found research conducted on personality traits combined with other factors such as burnout and work engagement, role engagement or job engagement (Ababneh, 2015; Akhtar et al., 2015; Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Halbesleben, Harvey, & Bolino, 2009; Inceoglu & Warr, 2011; Kim, Shin, & Swanger,

2009; Langelaan, Bakker, Van Doornen, & Schaufeli, 2006; Rantanen, Kinnunen, & Pulkkinen, 2013; Rich, 2006) this was not specific to personality traits and EE.

With literature indicating that EE is closely related with organisational performance outcomes (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2010), it is essential to explore this further and understanding that the impact of personality traits on EE could add to various aspects in organisational performance and success, such as selection, recruitment and talent management. Thus, limited studies exist investigating the relationship between personality traits and EE in general organisational settings (De Mello e Souza Wildermuth, 2008; De Mello e Souza Wildermuth & Pauken, 2008; Handa & Gulati, 2014; Jain & Ansari, 2018; Moshoeu, 2017; Steger et al., 2013), and limited research has been done on this relationship in financial organisations in general and in South Africa in particular. This study therefore seeks to contribute towards the body of knowledge which exists regarding this relationship in a South African context.

## **2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter the constructs of personality traits and Employee Engagement (EE) were discussed. The chapter started with a discussion of the background of personality, the personality traits theory, personality questionnaires based on trait theory and the Occupational Personality Questionnaire 32 (OPQ32r). Subsequently the construct of EE was discussed. This aspect of the chapter covered the background of EE, defined the construct of EE and discussed the approach to EE in the current study. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the relationship between personality traits and EE as contained in the literature.

In the next chapter attention will be given to the empirical findings of the study. The findings will be reported in the format of a journal article.

### **CHAPTER 3: ARTICLE**

*(This chapter is compiled according to the guidelines of the SA Journal of Industrial Psychology (SAJIP) regarding a journal article and will be submitted to the SAJIP for publication on acceptance of this dissertation)*

#### **The Relationship between Personality and Employee Engagement in a Financial Institution in South Africa**

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**Orientation:** In the ever-changing world of work, filled with many challenges, it is important to understand the impact of personality on Employee Engagement (EE), particularly as EE has been identified as a key aspect driving employee and organisational performance outcomes, influencing stability, success, organisational growth and giving the organisation a competitive edge. Understanding the relationship between personality and EE could add value to various aspects in the organisation and contribute meaningfully towards the existing body of knowledge regarding this relationship, specifically in a South African context.

**Research purpose:** The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between personality and EE within a financial institution in South Africa.

**Motivation for the study:** In South Africa the intense social changes that took place since 1994 have impacted significantly on organisations. This resulted in employees moving into more pressurised work settings filled with a variety of challenges such as competition, multicultural employees and affirmative action. Personality reveals how individuals react to their work circumstances and provides a basis for interpreting employees' behaviour at work. EE is gaining international attention, with acceptance that engaged employees feel connected to their job, which influences their performance in a positive way. Numerous studies have investigated personality and EE as separate constructs as well as their relationship with organisational results, but there is limited research which investigates the relationship between personality and EE and whether personality can predict EE, especially within financial institutions in South Africa. This study aims to contribute to the already available research regarding these two constructs.

**Research design, approach and method:** This study utilised a quantitative correlational research approach to study the relationship between personality and EE in a financial institution in South Africa. Secondary data were obtained from

from participants who completed an Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ32) in the Health Division of the organisation which was correlated with primary data gathered from the same participants who completed an Employee Engagement Questionnaire (EEQ). A random sample of 200 employees from the Health Division of the organisation was identified and 124 employees responded to the request to participate in this study, consisting of different ages, genders, races, regions, positions, educational levels and years of service. Descriptive statistics were generated to describe the sample and responses to the two measuring instruments. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to determine the reliability of the two instruments, while Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the statistical relationship between personality and EE. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine whether personality could predict EE. A cut-off point to determine the statistical significance of results was set at  $p \leq 0.05$ .

**Main findings:** The results of the study found that there is a statistically significant relationship between the Overall OPQ Score and the Overall EE Score (0.186); the Organisational Commitment sub-dimension of EE (0.222); and the Organisational Satisfaction sub-dimension of EE (0.176). The results also indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between one core domain of personality, namely Feelings and Emotions, and the Overall EE Score (0.251), and four sub-dimensions of EE, namely Immediate Manager (0.185), Organisational Commitment (0.199), Organisational Satisfaction (0.189) and Team (0.264). Although these relationships were statistically significant at the  $p \leq 0.5$  level, their effect size was weak indicating limited practical usefulness.



The results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that 4% of the variability in EE could be predicted by a combination of the three core personality domains. Although the adjusted  $r^2$  of 0.04 was statistically significant at the  $p \leq 0.01$  level, the variance explained was weak and of limited practical usefulness.

**Practical and managerial implications:** The results of this study could possibly play a role in research, team-building, talent management practices, career development, career management processes, counselling and shaping the culture of an organisation; in addition it can impact the selection and promotion processes in organisations. Further research will need to be done in order to determine this.

**Contribution and value add:** This study confirms that there is a statistically significant relationship between personality and EE in a financial institution in the South African context. However, the relationship is practically insignificant indicating that its applicability to the world of work is limited. The use of personality in EE decision making should thus be done with caution. This study also contributes to existing research regarding the two constructs of personality and EE and adds value to existing literature building on its body of knowledge whilst also being one of the few studies on personality and EE done in a financial institution in a South African context.

**Keywords:** Personality, personality traits, core personality domains, employee engagement, financial institution, correlation, regression analysis.

## **Introduction**

The world of work is ever changing (Baran, Shanock, & Miller, 2012), with the current challenge being its volatile economic environment and the possibility of a global recession ever present (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). Consequently, organisations need to exhibit world-class performance in order to deal with the global competitive challenges that arise (Sahoo & Sahu, 2009).

Organisations world-wide have over the past 20 years experienced competitive, vigorous, and fast changing work settings where the emphasis has changed from developing employees to cope with current conditions to nurturing employees to adapt to the constantly changing environment (Ababneh, 2015). Since 1994 South Africa itself has experienced intense social change that has had a major impact on organisations, who now found themselves with multicultural employees due to aspects such as affirmative action and employment equity (Thomson & De Bruin, 2007).

For years personality has been studied as a vital predictor of work results (Wefald, Reichard, & Serrano, 2011), being described as a pattern of relatively permanent traits, unique and individual characteristics that give consistency and individuality to behaviour. It influences the individual's view and response to circumstances (Handa & Gulati, 2014; Mohanty, 2016), while revealing individual reactions to work circumstances and providing a basis for interpreting and understanding employee behaviours at work (Bell & Njoli, 2016).

Engagement has been theoretically and empirically related to key work results due to the employees' higher levels of emotional attachment to the business (Wefald et al., 2011). Engaged employees will create a more prosperous organisation (Siddhanta & Roy, 2010) and engage more effectively when driven by non-financial rewards than by financial rewards (Gupta & Sharma, 2016).

In today's modern world, EE, whether at the organisational or individual level, is at the centre of attention from both academics, practitioners and in modern management practices (Ababneh, 2015; Du Plessis & Martins, 2017; Imandin, Bisschoff and Botha,

2014; Nienaber & Martins, 2014; 2015; Rothmann & Rothmann, 2010), as it has been shown to enhance an organisation's performance and competitive edge (Nienaber & Martins, 2014; 2015).

Research by various authors have linked EE with numerous positive organisational results for both the individual and organisation, for instance reduced employee turnover, increased job commitment, job satisfaction, higher productivity, higher client satisfaction and higher financial performance (Imandin et al., 2014; Martins, 2015; Siddhanta & Roy, 2010; Wefald et al., 2011).

According to Wefald et al. (2011), individuals with specific personality types are inclined to be comparatively engaged in work and this affects their affective commitment, level of job satisfaction and intention to exit the organisation. This is supported by Handa and Gulati (2014), who argue that employee selection centred on performance-related personality measures would enhance the likelihood of developing more engaged employees.

Britt, Dickinson, Greene-Shortridge, and McKibben (2007) proposed that when individuals are engaged in their work, their performance impacts on their identity and a sense of individual obligation for their work performance is felt.

The study by Wefald et al. (2011) indicated a strong correlation between personality and engagement measures that are important for organisations, and consequently suggested that personality traits could thus be utilised to select employees who will be engaged. However, Wefald et al., (2011) argued that there is a need for more research investigating the relationship between personality and engagement, as EE is influenced by many aspects, with personality being only one of them.

### **Research objective**

The general aim of the study was to determine the relationship between personality and EE.

## **What will follow**

The article begins with a review of relevant literature on the topic of personality, EE and the relationship between personality and EE. The literature review will be followed by the research method after which the results of the study will be discussed. The article then ends with limitations, recommendations for future research and practical implications for management and conclusions.

## **Literature review**

### **Personality**

There are several theoretical personality perspectives, each contributing uniquely to the understanding of individual differences in experience and behaviour (Srivastava, John, Gosling, & Potter, 2003), and several theoretic personality definitions relating to a person's dynamic organisation of the psychosocial systems determining their unique behaviour in a specific setting (Moerdyk, 2009). Allport (1937, as cited in Barrick and Ryan, 2004) referred to the word 'personality' as one of the most abstract in our language, while McAdams and Olson (2010) acknowledged that personality development over the individual's lifetime is multi-faceted and complex. Various authors have argued that personality is stable over time (Allport, 1937; Barrick & Ryan, 2004; John & Srivastava, 1999; Moerdyk, 2009; Nettle, 2007; Saucier & Goldberg, 1996; Servidio, 2015). It has also been explained as governing and encouraging behaviour (Bergh & Theron, 2003) as it is a psychological characteristic quality of a person (Barrick & Ryan, 2004). Thus, people cannot change themselves; they can change their ability to adjust or deal with incompatible surroundings (Barrick & Ryan, 2004). Although there have been some opposing views in disagreement with these statements. Roberts, Walton, and Viechtbauer (2006) stated that personality traits can change in adulthood while De Fruyt, Van Leeuwen, Bagby, Rolland and Rouillon (2006) indicated that this change can take place through therapy.

Researchers and the business community recognise that personality is important, as it affects work behaviour and work-related performance (Barrick, 2005; Hogan, 2017; Yesil & Sozbulir, 2013) and a person's ability to innovate at work (Yesil & Sozbulir, 2013). Furthermore, personality predicts occupational success, societal involvement,

health, mortality, happiness, quality of relationships and adaptation to life (McAdams & Olson, 2010).

According to Corr and Mathews (2009), there are six main personality perspectives.

- *The biological perspective, which includes perspectives* such as evolution, temperament, altruism, adaptation, heredity, sexual jealousy, cerebral hemisphere function and neurotransmitter pathways.
- *The humanistic perspective, which includes perspectives* such as creativity, self-actualisation, spirituality, flow, freedom, personal responsibility, choice, unconditional positive regard, acceptance, openness to experience, real self, empathy, peak experience, hierarchy of needs and positive psychology.
- *The learning or behavioural perspective, which includes perspectives* such as stimulus, response, conditioning, punishment, reinforcement, extinction, discrimination learning, shaping, situation, generalisation, gradients of approach and avoidance, labelling, act frequency and basic behavioural repertoire.
- *The social cognitive perspective, which includes perspectives* such as self-efficacy, expectancy, schema, outcome expectation, personal construct, cognitive person variable, reciprocal determinism, life narrative, modelling and constructive alternativism. This perspective centres on the interchange between social relationships and personality.
- *The psychodynamic perspective, which includes perspectives* such as id, ego, superego, libido, conflict, defence mechanisms, attachment, object-relations, oedipal conflict, fixation, and repression.
- *The trait perspective, which includes perspectives* such as trait, domain, type, factors, facet, extraversion, emotional stability or neuroticism.

According to Cloninger (2009) key researchers and theorists have contributed to developing these personality perspectives, which at times influence one another and have varying approaches to the universal theory of personality guiding practitioners' interventions and researchers' observations. In this study the personality trait

perspective will form the basis of the research, as this perspective enables personality traits or domains to be measured by means of various existing reliable and valid instruments (Van Der Linde, 2005).

### **Personality trait perspective**

The trait perspective of personality forms the foundation of the psychometric method to personality study, and according to this perspective personality is fragmented into a number of traits or domains existing in individuals to a lesser or greater degree (Masogo, 2013; Van der Linde, 2005). In this respect academics generally agreed that personality exists as a grouping of traits or domains and not in isolation (Blignaut & Ungerer, 2014).

Bouchard and Loehlin (2001) indicated that historically, the trait perspective regarding personality research was formulated by theorists such as Allport (1937), Murray (1938), Cattell (1943), and Goldberg (1981). Wood, Joseph, and Maltby (2009) stated that personality traits have been one of the most studied aspects of personality throughout the past 50 years. This was supported by Bouchard and Loehlin (2001), who stated that trait theorists have pursued the measurement of personality constructs more robustly than other personality theorists. Currently most personality psychologists see personality traits as the elementary part and basis of psychological individuality (McAdams & Olson, 2010), while Pervin, Cervone, and Olivier (2005) argued that the fundamental building blocks of personality are traits.

Personality traits are described in several different ways, with various typologies in existence (Blignaut & Ungerer, 2014; Wolff & Kim, 2012). Personality traits outline a dispositional sketch of psychological individuality (McAdams & Olson, 2010) and are elementary characteristics determining individual behaviour (McAdams & Olson, 2010; Zhao, Dong, Wu, Li, Su, Xia, Zheng, & Guo, 2018), while describing individual differences in their emotions, cognition and behaviour (Alkış & Temizel, 2018), their style of behaviour (Moerdyk, 2009) and characterise reasonably stable characteristics (Gerber, Huber, Doherty, & Dowling, 2012; Servidio, 2015). Personality traits are

strongly influenced by genetics (Gerber et al. 2012), while being able to grow over a lifetime according to normative patterns (Hudson, Roberts, & Lodi-Smith, 2012).

According to Tett and Burnett (2003), personality traits are important for the world of work, as they reveal five core points applicable to the prediction of performance and the selection of employees:

- One can forecast future behaviour based on past behaviour, as a person shows within-person consistency.
- The individual differences of between-person uniqueness generates the necessity to describe personality to a particular person being employed instead of another.
- Understanding personality triggers is important for comprehending personality's role in the work setting, as personality is hidden potential inherent in a person.
- Personality is seen by what we observe individuals doing, thus interpretations of personality are inferred from overt behaviour.
- Understanding the expression of personality is reliant on the context in which it is manifested.

The trait approach to personality focuses on detecting, defining and measuring particular traits or domains forming personality to determine individuals' unique characteristics (Cherry, 2018; Coaley, 2014). Personality assessment is commonly done through trait-based approaches, seeking to describe an individual's personality by means of generally established traits or domains (Moerdyk, 2009; Rothman & Coetzer, 2003), and are typically assessed by means of personality instruments (Moerdyk, 2009).

#### **Personality questionnaires based on the trait perspective**

A vast range of constructs exists between the scales in modern personality instruments and an overwhelming range of single words in theory that refer to personality characteristics in language today (Saucier & Srivastava, 2015). Thus,

personality psychologists are intent on finding a scientific taxonomy to study specified realms of personality characteristics. Taxonomy will divide phenomena into systematic groups and provide a standard scientific language that enables the collection of empirical findings (Saucier & Srivastava, 2015). Currently the main research method is personality assessment (Hogan, 2017), which plays a vital part in psychological practice and science by revealing an individual's nature and disposition to behave in a certain way (Weiner & Greene, 2017).

Many scholars have studied the validity of personality measures for recruitment purposes, and psychologists have joined in with studies regarding the constructs and structure of personality (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Psychometric instruments are made up of techniques for detecting what individuals are like and how they probably will think, feel and act (Weiner & Greene, 2017), and are typically used to assess aptitude and personality to find potential individuals possessing desirable personality traits to employ in an organisation (Handa & Gulati, 2014). Personality assessments are constructed by psychologists to measure personality traits (Boeree, 2006), where measurement has progressed to objectively explain individual differences, focusing on establishing what exists rather than whether what exists is bad or good (Coaley, 2014). According to Van der Linde (2005) a number of psychometric assessments have been developed to measure the individual traits that a person possesses. Examples are the Fifteen Factor Questionnaire (15FQ+) (Psytech, 2000) and the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ32) (Saville and Holsworth, 2013). In this study the OPQ32r was used to measure personality.

#### **Employee Engagement (EE)**

With the coming of technology modifications, globalisation and privatisation, there has been a more intensified awareness of engagement (Nienaber & Martins, 2014; Sahoo & Sahu, 2009), and EE has globally become a 'buzzword' (Shuck & Wollard, 2010), although EE research is still emerging and fairly new (Gupta & Sharma, 2016).

For organisations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, EE has been shown to be vital for individual and organisational performance (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Nienaber & Martins, 2014;



Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011; Siddhanta & Roy, 2010), for achieving competitive business results, profitability, growth, productivity, stability, retention and customer loyalty. EE has also proven to be vital for satisfaction and success (Gupta & Sharma, 2016; Jain & Ansari, 2018; Popli & Rizvi, 2016) and for adding to the organisation's sustainable competitive advantage (Nienaber & Martins, 2014; Sahoo & Sahu, 2009, Shuck & Wollard, 2010). EE is furthermore considered a winning recipe for building organisational excellence and a fundamental mechanism to foster a high-performance culture that drives organisational success (Sahoo & Sahu, 2009).

According to Gupta and Sharma (2016) when employees are engaged, they are capable, eager and prepared to contribute their best effort to assist in the attainment of organisational goals. This was supported by Sahoo and Sahu (2009), who stated that currently organisations consider and treat staff as more than just 'employees', building really great relationships with them, recognising their potential, talent and providing enriched work experiences. Sahoo and Sahu (2009) noted that the first thing to negatively impact organisational productivity is an employee who is not purposefully engaged in their own work. Adding to this Macey and Schneider (2008) stated that it is not easy to replicate and produce a workforce that is engaged.

Although the construct of EE has become increasingly popular in the past 20 years (Gupta & Sharma, 2016) and been described as compelling (Macey & Schneider, 2008), to date no definition has been accepted (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2010) and the construct of EE is still too loosely defined (Gupta & Sharma, 2016). It has been vague, inconsistently conceptualised and defined (Shuck & Wollard, 2010), with more than one meaning, while the measurements thereof are under-developed (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Nienaber & Martins, 2014). However, Shuck and Wollard (2010) stated that researchers agreed that EE is about adaptive behaviour resolutely centered on exceeding or meeting organisational results and as such defined EE as "an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioural state directed toward desired organizational outcomes" (Shuck & Wollard, 2010, p. 103). Nienaber and Martins (2015), in turn, refer to EE as employees both on an organisational and an individual level who are enthusiastic about and fully engrossed in their work, and thus

take positive action to promote the organisation's interests and reputation. For the purposes of this study this explanation of EE will be used.

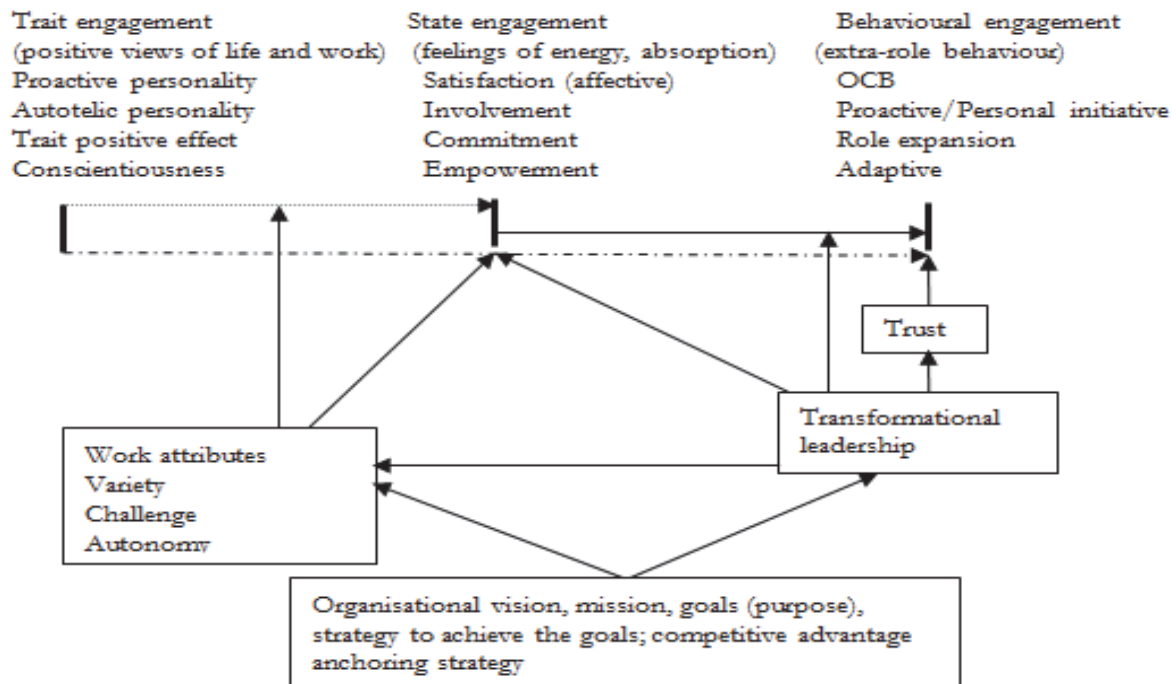
Based on their explanation of EE, Nienaber and Martins (2014) developed a framework and an Employee Engagement Questionnaire (EEQ) to measure the construct tailored for the South African context, drawing on existing EE theory and based on Macey and Schneider's (2008) proposed framework. In their framework, depicted in Figure 1 below, Macey and Schneider (2008) distinguished between three aspects of engagement, namely psychological state engagement, trait engagement and behavioural engagement. The effects of leadership and job features were proposed as moderators of these three aspects of engagement, which are described below (Macey & Schneider, 2008):

- Psychological state engagement is described as an antecedent of behavioural engagement defined in terms of either discretionary effort, or a specific form of extra-role or in-role behaviour or effort.
- Trait engagement is termed as the disposition or orientation to experience the world from a particular vantage point.
- Behavioural engagement is defined in terms of role, expansion, personal initiative, proactive behaviour and behaviour that gives attention to a broader array of tasks than is usual or typical.

The EE framework and EEQ developed by Nienaber and Martins (2014) in Figure 3.1 is explained as follows:

- It is made up of seven components representative of the individual level, the team or departmental level and the organisational level.
- The levels consist of the following components - individual level (psychological trait, state and behavioural engagement); team or department level (leadership, trust, work); organisational level (organisational mission, vision, goals, strategy, purpose and competitive advantage to achieve organisational goals).

Figure 3.1: An adapted diagram of Macey and Schneider (2008, p. 6)



Source: Nienaber and Martins (2014, p. 489)

- The questionnaire demonstrates the consequences of engagement (behavioural engagement) and antecedents of engagement (work characteristics, leadership, trait engagement, strategy, goals, trust and organisational vision, mission and competitive advantage) that impact organisational performance.
- The antecedents impact engagement, which has an influence on consequences and as a result on organisational performance.

Nienaber and Martins (2015) validated the EEQ covering the following six factors contributing to the overall construct of EE as per their definition: customer service; strategy and implementation; team level; immediate manager; organisational satisfaction; and organisational commitment.

### **The relationship between personality and employee engagement**

Several studies have investigated the relationship between personality traits and organisational factors such as burnout, work engagement, role engagement and job engagement (Ababneh, 2015; Akhtar, Boustani, Tsivrikos, Chamorro-Premuzic, 2015; Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011; Halbesleben, Harvey, & Bolino, 2009; Inceoglu & Warr, 2011; Kim, Shin, & Swanger, 2009; Langelaan, Bakker, Van Doornen, & Schaufeli, 2006; Rantanen, Kinnunen, & Pulkkinen, 2013; Rich, 2006). However, there is a dearth of research on the specific relationship between personality and EE (De Mello e Souza Wildermuth & Pauken, 2008; Handa & Gulati, 2014).

With literature indicating that EE is closely related to organisational performance outcomes (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2010), it is essential to explore the relationship between personality and EE, which could in turn affect an organisation's approach to aspects such as selection, recruitment and talent management where personality plays a role. Thus, although limited studies exist which investigated the relationship between personality and EE in general organisational settings (De Mello e Souza Wildermuth & Pauken, 2008; Handa & Gulati, 2014; Jain & Ansari, 2018; Moshoeu, 2017; Steger, Littman-Ovadia, Miller, Menger, & Rothmann, 2013), there is limited research on this relationship in financial organisations in general and in South Africa in particular. This study thus seeks to contribute towards the body of knowledge which exists regarding this relationship in a South African context.

The following **research hypotheses** were formulated for this study:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a statistically significant relationship between personality and EE.

**Hypothesis 2:** Personality is a statistically significant predictor of EE.

### **Research design**

#### **Research approach**

According to Creswell (2014), researchers in social and human sciences utilise one of three core research approaches which are qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods.

However, Creswell and Garret (2008) stated that research approaches constantly change responding to the needs of the world's interconnected, multifaceted global societies. The purpose of this study was explanatory or causal in which the relationship between personality and EE was investigated (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). To achieve this purpose a quantitative, non-experimental correlational research design was utilised to study the relationship between personality and EE. In quantitative research, numerical data are collected to respond to a particular research question (Christensen, 2001). Secondary data obtained from participants who completed an Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ32) for selection purposes over the period 2016 to 2018 in a specific division in a financial institution was correlated with primary data gathered from the same participants who completed an Employee Engagement Questionnaire (EEQ).

## **Research method**

### **Research setting**

This research was done in a division of a financial institution in South Africa which is registered on the stock exchange and has approximately 516 employees in branches in four different cities in South Africa. The research was done in only one division of the organisation, namely the Health Division.

### **Research participants and sampling**

The study population consisted of 516 employees in a financial institution with branches in four different cities in South Africa. A random sample of 200 employees from the Health Division of the organisation was identified and 124 employees responded to the request to participate in this study and consisted of different ages, genders, races, regions, positions, educational levels and years of service.

An overview of the biographical information of the participants is provided in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1:

Composition of the research sample (n = 124)

Item	Category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	23 – 33 years	62	50
	34 – 44 years	49	39.5
	45 – 56 years	13	10.5
Gender	Female	91	73.4
	Male	33	26.6
Position	Call centre agent	25	20.2
	Clinical	7	5.6
	Intern	1	0.8
	Manager	19	15.3
	Specialist	40	32.3
	Other	32	25.8
Race	African	51	41.1
	Indian	30	24.2
	White	22	17.7
	Coloured	21	17
Education Level	Grade 12 (Matric)	37	29.8
	Certificate	19	15.3
	Diploma	17	13.7
	Degree	33	26.6
	Post-Graduate Studies	18	14.6
Years of service in this organisation	1 – 3 years	57	46
	3 – 5 years	20	16.1
	6 – 10 years	17	13.7
	11 – 15 years	17	13.7
	16 - 20 years	8	6.5
	21 years and more	5	4

Table 3.1 depicts that the majority of the sample consisting of African (41.1%), females (73.4%), specialist (32.3%), between the ages of 23 – 33 years (50%), having a grade 12 (matric) (29.8%), with 1 – 3 years of service in the organisation (46%).

### Measuring instruments

#### Biographical Questionnaire

A biographical questionnaire was designed and utilised to collect information on the employees partaking in the study regarding their ages, genders, races, regions,

positions, educational levels and years of service. The information from the Biographical Questionnaire was used to describe the sample and was not used for further statistical analyses, as this did not form part of the aim and objectives of the study.

#### *The Occupational Personality Questionnaire 32 (OPQ32)*

Personality traits were measured with the OPQ32r, a newer version of the OPQ32 (Saville and Holsworth, 2013). The OPQ32 is a quantitative assessment that measures the occupational person-environment fit and occupational personality and is designed solely for use in business environments (Brown & Bartram, 2009). The OPQ32 measures three core personality domains which are related to behaviour in the work setting (Brown & Bartram, 2009). According to Brown and Bartram (2009) the OPQ32 is a reliable and valid instrument while Joubert and Venter (2013) report that it shows no practically significant differences between gender and culture groups in the South African setting. In a study by Joubert, Inceoglu, Bartram, Dowdeswell and Lin (2015) the OPQ32r's empirical reliability ranged from 0.67 to 0.92 on the three core dimensions. He, Bartram, Inceoglu and Van der Vijver (2014) also state that the OPQ32r shows good external validity and psychometric properties. The core domains measured by the OPQ32r are as follows:

- The Relationship Domain: persuasive, controlling, outspoken, independent-minded, outgoing, affiliative, socially confident, modest, democratic and caring.
- The Thinking Domain: data-rational, evaluative, behavioural, conventional, conceptual, innovative, variety-seeking, adaptable, forward-thinking, detail-conscious, conscientious and rule-following.
- Feeling and Emotions Domain: relaxed, worrying, tough-minded, optimistic, trusting, emotionally controlled, vigorous, competitive, achieving and decisive.

#### *The Employee Engagement Questionnaire (EEQ)*

EE was measured with the EEQ, a quantitative survey that measures employee engagement concurrently at an organisational and individual level in the South African setting (Nienaber & Martins, 2014). The 50-item questionnaire was specifically

developed in a South African context and respondents rate their responses to each item on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Nienaber and Martins (2015) report that the current scale gives proof of construct validity and all six aspects (organisational commitment, organisational satisfaction, immediate manager, team level, customer service, strategy and implementation) add to the overall construct of EE as defined in their study (Nienaber & Martins, 2015). The questionnaire is considered rigorous, the dimensions have internal consistency and the factor analysis and CFA statistics confirmed reliability and validity of the constructs (Nienaber & Martins, 2015). The reliability according to Martins (2015) generated acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging between 0.895 and 0.951 for all dimensions and sub-dimensions.

### **Research procedure**

Permission was granted by the study organisation's Health Divisional Executive in Human Capital to conduct the study within the Health Division. Permission was obtained from the organisation to send the EEQ to employees who had already completed the OPQ32r between 2016 and 2018 as part of the organisation's internal assessment process for selection purposes. The in-house Assessment Centre Head of Human Capital Practices agreed to release the OPQ32r assessment results once the 124 employees gave their written permission. Ethical clearance was obtained to conduct the study from the Research Committee of the Department of Industrial and Organisational Psychology at the University of South Africa.

With the assistance of the Human Resources Business Partner, the researcher received a list of all employees in the Health division, from which 200 employees' names were then randomly selected to participate in the study. Once the random selection was done, the researcher requested the in-house Assessment Centre to confirm that they held the OPQ32r assessment results for the randomly selected participants. After confirmation was received from the Assessment Centre, these 200 employees were approached through email and requested to participate in the study. The email contained the purpose and extent of the study, informed consent, and a clear explanation on the study with instructions on how to complete the Biographical



Questionnaire and the EEQ. It was also explained to the participants that on signing informed consent, they were giving permission to the assessment centre to release their valid OPQ32r results to the researcher. One hundred and twenty-four employees agreed to participate in the study and signed an Informed Consent Form, filled in their Biographical Questionnaire and EEQ and sent it back to the researcher via email or in a sealed envelope. A total of 124 responses were finally received back from the employees which were used as the final sample for the study. Written permission was also obtained to utilise the EEQ from Nienaber and Martins, the developers of the questionnaire. Codes were used to match respondents' biographical information to their OPQ32r and EEQ results in order to protect their identity and maintain confidentiality. The completed questionnaires were collated on an Excel spreadsheet which was provided to the statistician to compute the statistics for the study.

#### **Statistical analysis of data**

Descriptive statistics, which Van Zyl (2014) explains as summary statistics that quantitatively summarises features of a collection of information, were generated to describe the sample from the data gathered from the Biographical Questionnaire and to analyse the responses to the two measuring instruments. Cronbach's alpha coefficients, a measure of an instrument's internal reliability (Martins, 2015) were calculated to determine the reliability of the two instruments, while Pearson's product moment correlation coefficients, which indicates the strength of the linear relationship between variables (Van Zyl, 2014) were calculated to determine the statistical relationship between personality core domains and EE. Multiple regression analysis, used to predict the value of a dependent variable based on the values of two or more independent variables (Van Zyl, 2014), was used to determine whether the core domains of personality could predict EE. A cut-off point to determine the statistical significance of results was set at  $p \leq 0.05$ , where the 0.05 level of significance indicates that the relationship is significant (Williams, Anderson, & Sweeney, 2012).

## **Results**

### **Descriptive and reliability statistics**

Descriptive statistics and reliability statistics were calculated for both measuring

instruments used in the study. Table 3.2 and Table 3.3 indicate the number of items per sub-scale, means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum scores possible for each sub-scale, as well as the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for sub-dimensions and an overall score for each instrument.

*Table 3.2:*

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha for the OPQ32 obtained for the current study (n = 124)

Sub-scale measured	Items	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Cronbach's alpha
<u>Relationship with People</u>	10	5.16	0.77	2.90	7.10	0.82
Influence	4	4.54	1.20	1.75	9.00	0.49
Sociability	3	5.41	1.43	1.66	8.66	0.52
Empathy	3	5.73	1.30	2.66	9.00	0.88
<u>Thinking Style</u>	12	5.42	0.73	3.91	6.83	0.89
Analysis	3	5.19	1.37	2.33	8.66	0.87
Creativity and Change	5	5.24	0.75	3.60	7.00	0.88
Structure	4	5.80	1.33	2.75	9.75	0.86
<u>Feelings and Emotions</u>	10	5.41	0.57	3.50	7.00	0.89
Emotion	6	5.71	0.84	3.33	8.50	0.92
Dynamism	4	4.97	1.23	1.75	8.25	0.77
Overall OPQ Score	32	5.33	0.47	4.18	6.62	0.95

Table 3.2 indicates that respondents rated themselves average or high on all the OPQ32r dimensions on a ten-point scale, ranging from 4.54 for Influence to a high of 5.80 for Structure. The results also indicate that the OPQ32r (0.95) and all the OPQ32r sub-scales, ranging from a low of 0.77 for Dynamism to a high of 0.92 for Emotion, have satisfactory internal consistency, above the acceptable level of 0.70 proposed by Babbie (2010).

Table 3.3 indicates that respondents rated themselves above average or high on all the EE dimensions of the 5-point Likert scale, ranging from an above average of 3.47

for Strategy Implementation to a high of 4.10 for Organisational Commitment and Team Level. The results also indicate that the EEQ (0.97) and all the EEQ sub-scales, ranging from a low of 0.88 for Strategy Implementation to a high of 0.96 for Customer Service and Team, have acceptable internal consistency, being all above the acceptable level of 0.70 proposed by Babbie (2010).

*Table 3.3:*

Descriptive statistics and Cronbach's alpha for the EEQ obtained for the current study (n = 124)

Sub-scale measured	Items	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Cronbach's alpha
Customer Service	6	3.68	0.55	1.83	5.00	0.96
Immediate Manager	7	3.82	0.92	1.14	5.00	0.94
Organisational Commitment	6	4.10	0.70	1.00	5.00	0.90
Organisational Satisfaction	9	3.87	0.74	1.67	5.00	0.94
Strategy Implementation	10	3.47	0.64	1.20	5.00	0.88
Team level	12	4.10	0.67	1.92	5.00	0.96
Overall EE Score	50	3.84	0.52	2.20	4.90	0.97

### **Correlation Analysis**

The inter-correlations between an Overall OPQ Score and its three sub-dimensions and an Overall EE Score and its 6 sub-dimensions are shown in Table 3.4. Results indicate that there is a statistically significant relationship between the following:

- The Overall OPQ Score and the Overall EE Score (0.186 at the 0.05 level of significance).
- The Overall OPQ Score and the Organisational Commitment sub-dimension of EE (0.222 at the 0.05 level of significance).
- The Overall OPQ Score and the Organisational Satisfaction sub-dimension of EE (0.176 at the 0.05 level of significance).
- The Feelings and Emotions sub-dimension of the OPQ and Overall EE Score (0.251 at the 0.01 level of significance).
- The Feelings and Emotions sub-dimension of the OPQ and the Immediate Manager dimension of EE (0.185 at the 0.05 level of significance).

- The Feelings and Emotions sub-dimension of the OPQ and the Organisational Commitment dimension of EE (0.199 at the 0.05 level of significance).
- The Feelings and Emotions sub-dimension of the OPQ and the Organisational Satisfaction dimension of EE (0.189 at the 0.05 level of significance).
- The Feelings and Emotions sub-dimension of the OPQ and the Team Level dimension of EE (0.264 at the 0.01 level of significance).

*Table 3.4:*

Correlations for OPQ32 and sub-scales and EEQ and sub-scales

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Overall OPQ Score	1	.670**	.751**	.620**	.186*	.035	.116	.222*	.176*	.123	.122
2. Relationship with People	.670**	1	.164	.199*	.064	-.005	-.014	.164	.123	.090	-.042
3. Thinking Style	.751**	.164	1	.254**	.104	.016	.094	.114	.077	.061	.077
4. Feelings and Emotions	.620**	.199*	.254**	1	.251**	.077	.185*	.199*	.189*	.114	.264**
5. Overall EE Score	.186*	.064	.104	.251**	1	.729**	.673**	.728**	.789**	.801**	.668**
6. Customer Service	.035	-.005	.016	.077	.729**	1	.445**	.572**	.519**	.666**	.292**
7. Immediate Manager	.116	-.014	.094	.185*	.673**	.445**	1	.283**	.363**	.422**	.369**
8. Org Commitment	.222*	.164	.114	.199*	.728**	.572**	.283**	1	.671**	.659**	.251**
9. Org Satisfaction	.176*	.123	.077	.189*	.789**	.519**	.363**	.671**	1	.562**	.379**
10. Strategy Implementation	.123	.090	.061	.114	.801**	.666**	.422**	.659**	.562**	1	.324**
11. Team Level	.122	-.042	.077	.264**	.668**	.292**	.369**	.251**	.379**	.324**	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

### Regression Analysis

Table 3.5 shows the results of a standard multiple regression analysis with the three core domains of personality as measured by the OPQ as the independent variables and the Overall EE Score as the dependent variable. Multiple regression analysis was utilised to determine whether the OPQ and its three core domains could predict EE (Williams et al., 2012).

Table 3.5 indicates that the adjusted multiple coefficient of determination (adjusted  $R^2$ ) is 0.04. This indicated that a combination of the three core domains of the OPQ,

namely Relationship with People, Thinking Style and Feelings and Emotions, accounted for 4% of the variability of EE. Thus, the three core domains of personality account for a statistically significant amount of variance in EE ( $R^2 = 0.04$ ,  $F_{(3; 120)} = 2.72$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

*Table 3.5:*

Standard multiple regression analysis with an Overall EE Score as the *dependent variable and the three sub-dimensions of the OPQ as independent variables*

Model summary				ANOVA					
R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Coefficient of variation	Employee Engagement	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
				Regression	2.06765	3	0.68922	2.72	.047
0.503	0.064	0.040	13.0998	Residual Total	30.40494	120 123	0.25337		
Coefficients									
Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		t Value		Sig.	
Predictors		Parameter Estimate		Std. Error		Beta		Pr> (t)	
(Constant)		2.52773		0.52768		0		4.79	
Relationship with People		0.00165		0.06057		0.00247		0.03	
Thinking Style		0.02770		0.06431		0.003962		0.43	
Feelings & Emotions		0.21333		0.08271		0.23881		2.58	

## Discussion

Although a few studies exist linking personality and engagement (Ababneh, 2015; Akhtar et al., 2015; Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012; Handa & Gulati, 2014; Inceoglu & Warr, 2011; Rantanen et al., 2013), limited research has been published in South Africa regarding this relationship, especially in a financial environment. The current study thus aimed to determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between personality and EE in a financial institution in South Africa. To achieve this aim descriptive and reliability statistics were computed for the two instruments which were used to measure these two constructs, correlation coefficients were calculated

to measure the statistical relationship between the two constructs, and a multi-regression analysis was computed to determine whether personality could predict EE.

The results indicating that the scales measuring an Overall OPQ32r Score and the three core personality domains have high levels of internal consistency supporting various previous studies. Joubert et al., (2015) recorded average to high internal consistencies ranging from 0.67 to 0.92 on the personality scales, while Van Den Berg (2016) recorded average to high Cronbach's alpha coefficient scores ranging from 0.64 to 0.76 on the personality scales.

The results indicating that the EEQ and its six sub-dimensions have high levels of internal consistency support a study by Martins (2015) who recorded high internal consistencies ranging between 0.895 and 0.951 for all dimensions and sub-dimensions.

Hypothesis 1 of this study aimed to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between personality and EE. There is support for Hypothesis 1, as the results indicate that there is a statistical significant relationship between an Overall OPQ32r Score and an Overall EE Score of 0.186 at the 0.05 level of significance. However, although statistically significant, indicating that the relationship is not due to chance (Hair, Black & Babin, 2010), this relationship of 0.186 has a weak effect or is practically insignificant, which Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017) use to explain a relationship between two variables as not being very useful in the real world. The statistically significant relationship found between a personality score and EE in the current study supports a similar study by De Mello e Souza Wildermuth (2008) among paraprofessionals and human services professionals which also found a statistically significant relationship between personality and EE.

There is limited support for Hypothesis 1 regarding the relationship between core domains of personality as measured by the OPQ32r and the Overall EE Score and sub-dimension scores of EE. Only the Feelings and Emotions core domain of personality had a statistically significant relationship with the Overall EE Score (0.251,

$p \leq 0.01$ ) and with four of the six EE sub-dimensions, namely Immediate Manager (0.185,  $p \leq 0.05$ ), Organisational Commitment (0.199,  $p \leq 0.05$ ), Organisational Satisfaction (0.189,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and Team Level (0.264,  $p \leq 0.01$ ). None of the other two core personality domains had a statistically significant relationship with the Overall EE Score or any of the six EE sub-dimensions. As Feelings and Emotions are described as being tough-minded, optimistic, trusting, competitive and decisive (Saville and Holsworth, 2013), it follows that an employee who possesses these traits would tend to be engaged, which refers to employees who are enthusiastic and take positive actions to promote an organisation's reputation and interests (Nienaber & Martins, 2015). These results support studies by Hobfoll (2001) and Akhtar et al., (2015) who found that emotional resources in an individual (which relates to the Feelings and Emotions core personality domain measured in the current study) are responsible for bringing about positive organisational performance and attitudes, which then lead to engagement in the organisation.

Hypothesis 2 of this study aimed to determine whether personality is a statistically significant predictor of EE. The results of the multiple regression analysis in the current study supported this hypothesis as it indicated that 4% of the variability in EE is accounted for by a combination of the three core personality domains as measured by the OPQ32r, namely Relationship with People, Thinking Style and Feelings and Emotions. Although the adjusted  $r^2$  of 0.04 was statistically significant at the  $p \leq 0.01$  level, the variance explained (0.04) was what Cohen et al. (2017) refer to as a weak effect and of limited practical significance, indicating that it has limited practical usefulness when wanting to predict EE from personality scores. The results of the current study support similar studies also found that personality was a statistically significant predictor of EE. However, all of the above-mentioned studies produced mixed results as to which specific core personality domains had the largest effect size when predicting EE, making a comparison of the current study's predictive ability of core personality domains difficult

### **Limitations and recommendations for future studies**

This study had a number of limitations. Firstly, there were limited studies available utilising the OPQ32r to measure personality, which made the comparison of results problematic. Secondly, available EE studies utilised various different measurement assessments to measure the construct, which made the comparison of results difficult. A third limitation was that the random sample of 124 employees can be considered to be small and a larger sample could have offered additional information. A fourth limitation was that the study outcomes cannot be generalised to all organisations in South Africa as it was done in one division of one financial institution. Another limitation was that, the participating organisation sent out a survey concurrently to this study which influenced employee participation as employees did not want to fill in an additional survey. An additional limitation is that the study utilised a random sample which was limited to participants who had secondary data previously collected in the participating organisation which impacted on the sample size. Lastly, the sample was drawn from only one business unit in the financial organisation and outcomes may not be a true depiction of all the business units in the financial institution taking part in this study.

Recommendations are that the study be replicated in other organisations to confirm the results obtained in a financial institution. Moderating variables such as age, gender, position, educational level and years of service in the organisation should be investigated as these could affect the strength of the relationship between personality and EE. The researcher is also in agreement with Wefald et al., (2011) that further research should be done on the relationship between personality and EE to produce more insights into this relationship. It is therefore recommended that a longitudinal study be done to determine the predictive validity of personality, in which EE can be assessed and tracked for future in-depth understanding. A longitudinal study could offer valuable evidence with regards to the utilisation of personality as part of assessment in the selection process and development in talent management and the career development process.



### **Practical implications for management**

For employers, the work environment has become very complex, where productivity, talent shortages and profit margin management aggravate this complexity (Nienaber, Bussin, & Henn, 2011). Appointing future high-performing employees and retaining them is a complex issue which many organisations are currently faced with (Tladinyane, Coetzee, & Masenge, 2013). As a statistical significant relationship between personality in general and the core personality domain of Feelings and Emotions and EE have been found to exist, management could include this personality domain in their selection processes to ensure that they appoint personnel who are likely to become engaged in their work leading to future high performance. However, as this relationship is practically insignificant (Cohen et al., 2017), such decisions should be made with caution.

### **Conclusions**

The OPQ and EEQ have acceptable levels of internal consistency when utilised within a financial organisation in South Africa. A statistically significant relationship exists between an Overall OPQ32r Score and an Overall EE score in a South African financial organisation, but this relationship is of small practical significance. Furthermore, the use of personality to predict EE must be done with caution.

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## **CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the conclusions, limitations and recommendations of the study will be discussed. The chapter will start with a discussion of the conclusions regarding the aims of the study, and thereafter the study limitations will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with recommendations for the participating organisation and the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology (IOP) with regards to the relationship between personality and Employee Engagement (EE).

### **4.2 CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE AIMS OF THE STUDY**

#### **4.2.1 Conclusions regarding the specific theoretical aims of the study**

The study had three specific theoretical aims:

- To conceptualise the construct of personality.
- To conceptualise the construct of EE.
- To conceptualise the relationship between personality and EE.

##### **4.2.1.1**     *The first theoretical aim: To conceptualise the construct of personality from a literature perspective*

The first theoretical aim was attained in Chapter 2, and the subsequent conclusions were drawn from the literature review:

- There are several theoretic perspectives and definitions of personality (Moerdyk, 2009; Srivastava et al., 2003).

- There are six personality perspectives, namely the biological, humanistic, behavioural, social cognitive, psychodynamic and trait approaches (Corr & Mathews, 2009), which guide practitioners' interventions and researchers' observations, and influence one another (Cloninger, 2009).
- Historically, the trait approach to personality research was formulated and developed by theorists such as Allport (1937), Murray (1938), Cattell (1943), and Goldberg (1981).
- Numerous personality researchers (Allport, 1937; Amir et al., 2014; Blignaut & Ungerer, 2014; Boeree, 2006; Bouchard & Loehlin, 2001; Cattell, 1943; Coaley, 2014; Furnham, 1997; Goldberg, 1981; He et al., 2014; John & Srivastava, 1999; King et al., 2005; Moerdyk, 2009; Murray, 1938; Roberts et al., 2007; Saucier & Goldberg, 1996; Servidio, 2015; Tett & Guterman, 2000; Van Der Linde, 2005; Zhao et al., 2018) have conducted studies or literature reviews on personality.
- The personality traits perspective has been one of the most studied regarding personality (Wood et al., 2009), pursuing measurement of personality constructs (Bouchard & Loehlin, 2001) and forming the foundation of the psychometric measurement of personality (Van der Linde, 2005).
- Tett and and Burnett (2003) state that personality is important for the world of work, as it reveals five core points, namely:
  - One can forecast future behaviour based on past behaviour, as a person shows within-person consistency.
  - The individual differences of between-person uniqueness generates the necessity to describe personality to a particular person being employed instead of another.

- Understanding personality triggers is important for comprehending personality's role in the work setting, as personality is hidden potential inherent in a person.
- Personality is seen by what we observe individuals doing, thus interpretations of personality are inferred from overt behaviour.
- Understanding the expression of personality is reliant on the context in which it is manifested.
- These five core points revealed by personality are applicable to the prediction of performance and the selection of employees (Tett & Burnett, 2003) and are strong predictors of behaviour (McAdams & Olson, 2010). The above mentioned core points also impact on a range of behavioural and attitudinal outcomes (Gerber et al., 2012), predict how a person is most likely to act most of the time (Coaley, 2014) and predict vital life outcomes, such as divorce, mortality and success in work (Roberts et al., 2007).
- The trait perspective to personality places emphasis on detecting, defining and measuring the particular traits or domains forming personality to determine a person's individual unique characteristics (Cherry, 2018; Coaley, 2014). Personality is often referred to as traits or domains that are measurable (Van Der Linde, 2005) and personality assessment is commonly done through trait-based approaches seeking to describe an individual's personality by means of generally established traits or domains (Moerdyk, 2009; Rothman & Coetzer, 2003). Personality traits or domains are typically assessed by means of personality instruments (Moerdyk, 2009).
- According to trait perspective, personality is fragmented into a number of traits or domains that to a lesser or greater degree exist in every single



person, as part of a grouping of traits or domains and not in isolation (Blignaut, & Ungerer, 2014; Van Der Linde, 2005).

#### 4.2.1.2 *The second theoretical aim: To conceptualise the construct of EE from a literature perspective*

The second theoretical aim was attained in Chapter 2 and the subsequent conclusions were drawn from the literature review:

- Engagement is a prevalent and persistent affective cognitive state (Schaufeli et al., 2002).
- At varying times engagement refers to psychological traits, states, behaviours, their effect and antecedents (Macey & Schneider, 2008).
- Engagement is a moment by moment state of motivation including physical effort and psychological arousal (Whittington et al., 2017) rather than a stable trait signifying a predisposition to live by means of enthusiasm (Macey & Schneider, 2008).
- Evidence substantiates the positive results of engagement where EE has been identified as a core strategy for organisations to succeed and is an influential element used to gain organisational growth and stability. EE also influences organisational results such as high organisational performance, profitability, productivity, customer satisfaction and loyalty, retention and business success on an individual and organisational level (Gupta & Sharma, 2016; Jain & Ansari, 2018; Popli & Rizvi, 2016).
- EE can be correlated to business performance, as it is measurable (Gupta & Sharma, 2016).

- The construct of EE is compelling, vital and popular for consultancy, academics and organisations on an individual and organisational performance level (Gupta & Sharma, 2016; Nienaber & Martins, 2014; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Popli & Rizvi, 2016; Sahoo & Sahu, 2009; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2011; Shuck & Wollard, 2010).
- EE contributes towards an organisation's competitive edge (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Nienaber & Martins, 2014; Sahoo & Sahu, 2009), profitability (Shuck & Wollard, 2010), business performance and goal attainment (Gupta & Sharma, 2016), stability and growth (Jain & Ansari, 2018) as well as success (Jain & Ansari, 2018; Sahoo & Sahu, 2009).
- The constructs of engagement, EE and work engagement are often used interchangeably, which can cause confusion (Nienaber & Martins, 2014).

#### 4.2.1.3 *The third theoretical aim: To conceptualise the relationship between personality traits and EE from a literature perspective*

The third theoretical aim was attained in Chapter 2, and the subsequent conclusions were drawn from the literature review:

- Individual facets, including personality, the job itself, the environment and leadership are all linked to EE (De Mello e Souza Wildermuth & Pauken, 2008).
- Engaged individuals are more likely to exhibit facets of personality such as high self-esteem, internal locus of control, hardiness, active coping style, high extraversion and low neuroticism (De Mello e Souza Wildermuth and Pauken, 2008).

- Certain personality traits such as conscientiousness, openness to change, agreeableness and extraversion act as moderators and affect engagement levels (Jain & Ansari, 2018).
- The interaction of personality traits (agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability) and work-life balance constructs (positive home-work interaction and positive work-home interaction) positively and significantly predict EE (Moshoeu, 2017).
- There is a positive correlation between affective disposition, meaningful work and work engagement, although a difference was found in the relationship between these depending on the degree to which the person saw their work as meaningful (Steger et al., 2013).
- The personality traits of consolidation and extraversion have been shown to be positively correlated with as well as predictors of engagement (De Mello e Souza Wildermuth, 2008).
- There are limited studies existing that investigated the relationship between personality and EE in the general organisational settings (De Mello e Souza Wildermuth, 2008; Handa & Gulati, 2014; Jain & Ansari, 2018; Moshoeu, 2017; Steger et al., 2013).

#### **4.2.2 Conclusions regarding the specific empirical aims of the study**

The specific empirical aims were the following:

- To measure personality and its three core domains by means of the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ32r) in a financial institution in South Africa.

- To measure EE and its six sub-dimensions by means of the Employee Engagement Questionnaire (EEQ) in a financial institution in South Africa.
- To determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between core personality domains as measured by the OPQ32r and EE and its six sub-dimensions as measured by the EEQ in a financial institution in South Africa.
- To determine whether core personality domains can predict EE and its sub-dimensions in a financial institution in South Africa.
- To make recommendations for further research in the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology with regards to personality and EE.
- To make recommendations to the participating organisation with regards to personality and EE.

*4.2.2.1 The first empirical aim: To measure personality and its three core domains by means of the Occupational Personality Questionnaire (OPQ32r) in a financial institution in South Africa.*

The first empirical aim was attained by using the OPQ32r to measure personality and its three core domains from 124 randomly sampled employees. The subsequent conclusions were drawn from the empirical research:

- The internal consistency of the OPQ32r in the current study produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.95 for the Overall OPQ Score, and Cronbach alphas ranging from 0.70 to 0.92 for all the OPQ32r core domain subscales. This internal consistency of the OPQ is above Babbie's (2010) suggested cut-off score of 0.70.

- It can thus be concluded that the OPQ32r is a reliable instrument for measuring core personality domains in a financial institution in South Africa.

#### 4.2.2.2 *The second empirical aim: To measure EE and its six sub-dimensions by means of the Employee Engagement Questionnaire (EEQ) in a financial institution in South Africa*

The second empirical aim was attained by using the 50 item EEQ to measure EE and its six sub-dimensions from 124 randomly sampled employees. The subsequent conclusions were drawn from the empirical research:

- The internal consistency in the current study produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.97 for the Overall EE Score, and Cronbach alpha's ranging from 0.88 to 0.96 for all the EE dimensions. This internal consistency of the EEQ is above Babbie's (2010) suggested cut-off score of 0.70.
- It can thus be concluded that the EEQ is a reliable instrument for measuring EE and its six sub-dimensions in a financial institution in South Africa.

#### 4.2.2.3 *The third empirical aim: To determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between core personality domains as measured by the OPQ32r and EE and its six sub-dimensions as measured by the EEQ in a financial institution in South Africa*

The third empirical aim was attained by computing the correlation coefficients between the Overall OPQ32r Score and its three core personality domains and the Overall EE score and its six sub-dimensions. The cut-off point to determine the statistical significance of results was set at  $p \leq 0.05$ , where 0.05 level of significance indicates that the relationship is significant (Williams, Anderson, & Sweeney, 2012). The subsequent conclusions were drawn from the empirical research:

- There is a statistically significant relationship between the Overall OPQ32r Score and the Overall EE Score of 0.186, the Organisational Commitment sub-dimension of EE (0.222), and the Organisational Satisfaction sub-dimension of EE (0.176), which supports the findings by De Mello e Souza Wildermuth's (2008) and Handa and Gulati (2014) that personality was positively related to engagement.
- There is a statistically significant relationship between one core domain of personality, namely Feelings and Emotions, and the Overall EE Score (0.251), as well as four sub-dimensions of EE, namely Immediate Manager (0.185), Organisational Commitment (0.199), Organisational Satisfaction (0.189) and Team (0.264). These results support the studies by Akhtar et al. (2015) and Hobfoll (2001), who found that emotional resources in an individual (which relate to the Feelings and Emotions core personality domain measured in the current study) are responsible for bringing about positive organisational performance and attitudes, which then lead to engagement in the organisation.
- No statistically significant relationships were found between the other two core domains of personality, namely Relationships with People and Thinking Style with the Overall EE Score or any of the six sub-dimensions of EE.
- Although statistically significant relationships were found between personality and one of its core domains and EE and four of its sub-dimensions in the current study, the correlations were of weak effects and practically insignificant, which Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017) used to explain a relationship between two variables as not being very useful in the real world. These results should thus be used with caution when making decisions regarding personality and EE.

#### 4.2.2.4 *The fourth empirical aim: To determine whether core personality domains can predict EE and its sub-dimensions in a financial institution in South Africa*

The fourth empirical aim was attained by calculating a standard multiple regression analysis with the three core domains of personality as measured by the OPQ32r as the independent variables and the Overall EE Score as the dependent variable. Multiple regression analysis was utilised to determine whether the independent variable could predict the dependent variable (Williams, Anderson, & Sweeney, 2012). The subsequent conclusions were drawn from the empirical research:

- Core personality domains are a statistically significant predictor of EE. The results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that 4% of variability in EE is accounted for by a combination of the three dimensions of the OPQ32r, namely Relationship with People, Thinking Style and Feelings and Emotions. These results support the study by Akhtar et al. (2005), who found that personality could predict engagement.
- Although the core personality domains could account for a statistically significant amount of variance in EE ( $R^2 = 0.04$ ,  $F_{(3; 120)} = 2.72$ ,  $p < .05$ ), this variance was only 4% and is what Cohen et al. (2017) refer to as a weak effect and of limited practical significance, indicating that it has limited practical usefulness when wanting to predict EE from personality scores. The results of the current study support similar studies by Akhtar et al. (2011), Inceoglu & Warr (2011), Kim et al. (2009) and Wefald et al. (2011), who also found that personality was a statistically significant predictor of EE. However, all of the above-mentioned studies produced mixed results as to which specific core personality domains had the largest effect size when predicting EE, making a comparison of the current study's predictive ability of core personality domains difficult.

4.2.2.5 *The fifth empirical aim: To make recommendations for further research and for the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology with regards to personality and EE*

These recommendations are addressed under section **4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**.

4.2.2.6 *The sixth empirical aim: To make recommendations to the participating organisation with regards to personality and EE*

These recommendations are addressed under section **4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**.

### **4.2.3 Conclusion regarding the general aim of the study**

The general aim of this study was to determine the relationship between personality and EE. The empirical outcomes of the study indicated a statistically significant relationship existing between personality and EE, and the conclusion can be made that the general aim of the study was attained.

### **4.2.4 Conclusions regarding the research hypotheses**

Based on the correlations obtained in Table 3.4 and the results obtained from the multiple regression analysis in Table 3.5, the following conclusions were made regarding the research hypotheses:

*H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between personality and EE.* The hypotheses is supported as the findings of the current study indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between personality and EE ( $r = 0.186$ ;  $p \leq .05$ ). The results indicated that there is a statistical significant relationship between an Overall OPQ32r Score and an Overall EE Score of 0.186 at the 0.05 level of significance. However, although statistically significant, indicating that the relationship is not due to chance (Hair, Black & Babin, 2010), this



relationship of 0.186 has a weak effect or is practically insignificant, which Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2017) used to explain a relationship between two variables as not being very useful in the real world. The statistically significant relationship found between a personality score and EE in the current study supports a similar study by De Mello e Souza Wildermuth (2008) among paraprofessionals and human services professionals which also found a statistically significant relationship between personality and EE.

There is limited support for Hypothesis 1 regarding the relationship between core domains of personality as measured by the OPQ32r and the Overall EE Score and sub-dimension scores of EE. Only the Feelings and Emotions core domain of personality had a statistically significant relationship with the Overall EE Score (0.251,  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and with four of the six EE sub-dimensions, namely Immediate Manager (0.185,  $p \leq 0.05$ ), Organisational Commitment (0.199,  $p \leq 0.05$ ), Organisational Satisfaction (0.189,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and Team Level (0.264,  $p \leq 0.01$ ). None of the other two core personality domains had a statistically significant relationship with the Overall EE Score or any of the six EE sub-dimensions. As Feelings and Emotions are described as being tough-minded, optimistic, trusting, competitive and decisive (Saville and Holsworth, 2013), it follows that an employee who possesses these traits would tend to be engaged, which refers to employees who are enthusiastic and take positive actions to promote an organisation's reputation and interests (Nienaber & Martins, 2015). These results support studies by Akhtar et al. (2015) and Hobfoll (2001), who found that emotional resources in an individual (which relate to the Feelings and Emotions core personality domain measured in the current study) are responsible for bringing about positive organisational performance and attitudes, which then lead to engagement in the organisation.

*H2: Personality is a statistically significant predictor of EE.* The results of the multiple regression analysis in the current study supported this hypothesis as it indicated that 4% of the variability in EE is accounted for by a combination of the three core personality domains as measured by the OPQ32r, namely

Relationship with People, Thinking Style and Feelings and Emotions. Although the adjusted  $r^2$  of 0.04 was statistically significant at the  $p \leq 0.01$  level, the variance explained (0.04) was what Cohen et al. (2017) refer to as a weak effect and of limited practical significance, indicating that it has limited practical usefulness when wanting to predict EE from personality scores. The results of the current study support similar studies by Akhtar et al. (2011), Inceoglu & Warr (2011), Kim et al. (2009) and Wefald et al. (2011), who also found that personality was a statistically significant predictor of EE. However, all of the above-mentioned studies produced mixed results as to which specific core personality domains had the largest effect size when predicting EE, making a comparison of the current study's predictive ability of core personality domains difficult.

### **4.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The current study experienced a number of limitations associated with the literature review and the empirical findings.

#### **4.3.1 Limitations of the literature review**

- There is limited research on the relationship between personality and EE, especially in a financial institution in the South African setting.
- The limited research available on the relationship between personality and EE made it difficult to compare the results obtained in the current study to other similar studies.

#### **4.3.2 Limitations of the empirical findings**

- There were limited studies available utilising the OPQ32r to measure personality, which made the comparison of results problematic.

- Available EE studies utilised various different measurement assessments to measure the construct, which made the comparison of results difficult.
- The participating organisation sent out the Organisational Human Factor Benchmark (OHFB) concurrent to the present study. The OHFB is a climate survey. This had an influence on employee participation as employees did not want to fill in another survey. This was reflected in only 124 out of a possible 200 qualifying employees responding to the request to take part in this study.
- The random sample of 124 employees can be considered to be small and a larger sample could have offered more in-depth information.
- The study and random sample were limited to employees who had previously completed the OPQ32r, as this secondary data were needed to compare to the data obtained from the EEQ, and this had an influence on the size of the sample which was considered small.
- The study outcomes cannot be generalised to all organisations in South Africa as it was done in one division of one financial institution.
- The sample was mainly drawn from only one component of a business unit in the financial organisation, namely the Health division, therefore outcomes may not be a true depiction of all the business units in the participating financial institution.

## **4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.4.1 Recommendations for further research**

The following recommendations are made for future research:

- The study should be done in other organisations besides a financial institution.
- A larger sample size that represents various industries in South Africa should be used.
- A longitudinal study should be done to determine the predictive validity of personality in which EE can be assessed and tracked for future in-depth understanding. A longitudinal study could also offer valuable evidence with regards to the utilisation of personality as part of assessment in the selection process and development in talent management and the career development process.
- Moderating variables such as age, gender, position, educational level and years of service in the organisation could affect the strength of the relationship between personality and EE and thus should be investigated.

#### **4.4.2 Recommendations for the participating organisation**

- The core personality domain of Feelings and Emotions could be used in the organisation's selection process to ensure that future engaged employees are selected.
- Human Capital and Leaders should be educated and made aware of the effect of personality on EE, as well as how this effect could have a variety of positive outcomes for the individual and the organisation.

#### **4.4.3 Recommendations for the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology**

- As personality and EE are important constructs in the field of IOP, further research should be done on the relationship between these two constructs to increase available knowledge in this area.

- A longitudinal study to determine the predictive validity of personality on EE could offer valuable evidence with regards to the utilisation of personality as part of the selection, talent management and career development processes.
- Additional research utilising larger samples in a variety of organisations should be conducted to increase the body of knowledge available to the field of IOP regarding the relationship between personality and EE.

#### **4.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In this chapter the conclusions, limitations and recommendations of the study were discussed. The chapter started with a discussion of the conclusions regarding the aims of the study, followed by a discussion of the study limitations. The chapter closed with recommendations for the organisation and the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology (IOP) with regards to the relationship between personality and Employee Engagement (EE).

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## PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

## AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH

Name: .....

Contact number: .....

Email address: .....

I,..... ID Number:.....,  
agree to take part in the research conducted by Candace Thomas, as detailed in the  
accompanying letter.

I clearly understand that:

- the information collected from the completed questionnaire will be used for research purposes only.
- the information in relation to me will be treated as confidential and will not be made available to any other person, including members of my institution.
- participants will not be provided with individual feedback.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

**QUESTIONNAIRE'S INSTRUCTIONS**

The following questionnaire covers questions relating to employee engagement. Please carefully read each question and select the response which most accurately represents your opinion. There are no right or wrong responses to these questions, therefore please give an honest response to each statement. For each question you will be required to indicate to what degree you agree with the statement 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. Please answer all the questions. In total, it will take approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

A reminder that all responses will be kept completely confidential. The research report taken from the overall findings will consist of an integrated summary of all the results. When reporting on the findings no individual will be identified by name.

The questionnaire is divided into two sections:

Section A: Biographical Information

Section B: Employment Engagement Questionnaire

Your response will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be used for research purposes.

Thank you for taking part in this vital research.

**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

Please answer the following questions below by making an 'X' in the applicable space.

**Age:**

Actual age, e.g. 20 or 62 \_\_\_\_\_

**Gender:**

1	Male	
2	Female	

**Race:**

1	African	
2	Coloured	
3	Indian	
4	White	
5	Other	

**Highest qualification obtained:**

1	Matric	
2	Certificate	
3	Diploma	
4	Degree	
5	Postgraduate (please specify e.g. MCom or PhD)	

**Region:**

1	Braamfontein	
2	Centurion	
3	Cape Town	
4	Durban	

**Position:**

1	Manager	
2	Specialist	
3	Call Centre Agent	
4	Clinical	
5	Other, specify	

**Years of employment at the organisation:**

1	1–3 years	
2	> 3–5 years	
3	> 6–10 years	
4	> 11–15 years	
5	> 16–20 years	
6	21+ years	



## APPENDIX D

### OPQ32r TRAITS

TRAITS	DEFINITION OF LOW SCORE (Sten of 1 – 4)	DEFINITION OF HIGH SCORE (Sten of 7 – 10)
<b>RELATIONSHIP WITH PEOPLE</b>		
PERSUASIVE	Rarely pressures other to change their views, dislikes selling, less comfortable using negotiation	Enjoys selling, comfortable using negotiation, likes to change other people's views
CONTROLLING	Happy to let others take charge, dislikes telling people what to do, unlikely to take the lead	Likes to be in charge, takes the lead, tells others what to do, takes control
OUTSPOKEN	Holds back from criticising others, may not express own views, unprepared to put forward own opinion	Freely expresses opinions, makes disagreement clear, prepared to criticise others
INDEPENDENT-MINDED	Accepts majority decisions, prepared to follow the consensus	Prefers to follow own approach, prepared to disregard majority decisions
OUTGOING	Quiet and reserved in groups, dislikes being centre of attention	Lively and animated in groups, talkative, enjoys attention
AFFILIATIVE	Comfortable spending time away from people, values time spent alone, seldom misses the company of others	Enjoys others' company, likes to be around people, can miss the company of others
SOCIALLY CONFIDENT	Feels more comfortable in less formal situations, can feel awkward when first meeting people	At ease in formal situations, feels comfortable when first meeting people
MODEST	Makes strengths and achievements known, talks about personal success	Dislikes discussing personal achievements, keeps quiet about personal success
DEMOCRATIC	Prepared to make decisions without consultation, prefers to make decisions alone	Consults widely, involves others in decision-making, less likely to make decisions alone
CARING	Selective with sympathy and support, remains detached from others' personal problems	Sympathetic and considerate towards others, helpful and supportive
<b>THINKING STYLES</b>		
DATA RATIONAL	Prefers dealing with opinions and feelings rather than facts and figures, likely to avoid using statistics	Likes working with numbers, enjoys analysing statistical information, bases decisions on facts and figures
EVALUATIVE	Does not focus on potential limitations, dislikes critically analysing information, rarely looks for errors or mistakes	Critically evaluates information, looks for potential limitations, focuses upon errors
BEHAVIOURAL		

	Does not question the reasons for people's behaviour, tends not to analyse people	Likes to understand motives and behaviour, enjoys analysing people
CONVENTIONAL	Favours changes to work methods, prefers new approaches, less conventional	Prefers well-established methods, favours a more conventional approach
CONCEPTUAL	Prefers to deal with practical rather than theoretical issues, dislikes dealing with abstract concepts	Interested in theories, enjoys discussing abstract concepts
INNOVATIVE	More likely to build on than generate ideas, less inclined to be creative and inventive	Generates new ideas, enjoys being creative, thinks of original solutions
VARIETY SEEKING	Prefers routine, is prepared to do repetitive work, does not seek variety	Prefers variety, tries out new things, likes changes to regular routine, can become bored by repetitive work
ADAPTABLE	Behaves consistently across situations, unlikely to behave differently with different people	Changes behaviour to suit the situation, adapts approach to different people
FORWARD THINKING	More likely to focus upon immediate than long-term issues, less likely to take a strategic perspective	Takes a long-term view, sets goals for the future, more likely to take a strategic perspective
DETAIL CONSCIOUS	Unlikely to become preoccupied with detail, less organised and systematic, dislikes tasks involving detail	Focuses on detail, likes to be methodical, organised and systematic, may become preoccupied with detail
CONSCIENTIOUS	Sees deadlines as flexible, prepared to leave some tasks unfinished	Focuses on getting things finished, persists until the job is done
RULE FOLLOWING	Not restricted by rules and procedures, prepared to break rules, tends to dislike bureaucracy	Follows rules and regulations, prefers clear guidelines, finds it difficult to break rules

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#### FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

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RELAXED	Tends to feel tense, finds it difficult to relax, can find it hard to unwind after work	Finds it easy to relax, rarely feels tense, generally calm and untroubled
WORRYING	Feels calm before important occasions, less affected by key events, free from worry	Feels nervous before important occasions, worries about things going wrong
TOUGH-MINDED	Sensitive, easily hurt by criticism, upset by unfair comments or insults	Not easily offended, can ignore insults, may be insensitive to personal criticism
OPTIMISTIC	Concerned about the future, expects things to go wrong, focuses on the negative aspects of a situation	Expects things will turn out well, looks to the positive aspects of a situation, has an optimistic view of the future
TRUSTING		Trusts people, sees others as reliable and honest, believes what others say

	Wary of others' intentions, finds it difficult to trust others, unlikely to be fooled by people	
EMOTIONALLY CONTROLLED	Openly expresses feelings, finds it difficult to conceal feelings, displays emotions clearly	Can conceal feelings from others, rarely displays emotion
VIGOROUS	Likes to take things at a steady pace, dislikes excessive work demands	Thrives on activity, likes to keep busy, enjoys having a lot to do
COMPETITIVE	Dislikes competing with others, feels that taking part is more important than winning	Has a need to win, enjoys competitive activities, dislikes losing
ACHIEVING	Sees career progression as less important, looks for achievable rather than highly ambitious targets	Ambitious and career-centred, likes to work towards demanding goals and targets
DECISIVE	Tends to be cautious when making decisions, likes to take time to reach conclusions	Makes quick decisions, reaches conclusions quickly, less cautious

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## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

### Instructions:

The purpose of the following questions is to measure the degree of employee engagement in the Health division of MMI Holding (Pty) Ltd. This questionnaire consists of 50 items.

Please answer each of the following questions by marking the number that best indicates the degree to which you disagree or agree with the following statements. Please answer all the items.

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

### Customer Service

1. In my business unit we continuously seek customer feedback.
2. I feel our service to our customers usually exceeds their expectations.
3. Our organisation has the systems and procedures to support me in providing good customer service.
4. We identify the right opportunities for our customers.
5. Our organisation has a competitive advantage in the market.
6. My performance is linked to the strategy of the organisation.

### Immediate Manager

7. My immediate manager inspires people in my business unit.
8. My immediate manager does a good job of 'managing the work' - that is making appropriate work assignments, scheduling the work, setting priorities, etc. for me and my team.
9. I trust my immediate manager.
10. My immediate manager trusts me.
11. I have the support from my immediate manager to do my job effectively.
12. My immediate manager gives me regular feedback that helps me to improve my performance.
13. I am satisfied with the way that my work performance is evaluated.

### Organisational Commitment

14. I am positive about my future in the organisation.
15. I feel committed to the organisation.
16. I am proud to work for this organisation.
17. I will encourage my friends to join the organisation.
18. My personal values are in line with organisational values.
19. I am excited by our vision and mission.
20. At my work I feel bursting with energy.
21. At my job I feel strong and vigorous.
22. My job inspires me.
23. I feel positive about my work.

24. I feel my work is fulfilling. ☐
25. I enjoy my work. ☐
26. My job is meaningful to me. ☐
27. When I get up in the morning, I am eager to go to work. ☐
28. My job challenges me to think about problems in new ways. ☐

### Strategy and Implementation

29. The organisational leadership gives employees a clear picture of the directions the organisation is headed. ☐
30. The organisation vision for the future is inspiring. ☐
31. In my organisation individual employees are involved in implementing the strategy of the organisation. ☐
32. In our organisation individual employees accept accountability for their performance. ☐
33. In our organisation employees are encouraged to develop ideas to improve work procedures and methods. ☐
34. The organisation has a stimulating environment. ☐
35. Initiative is encouraged in the organisation. ☐
36. Risk taking is encouraged in the organisation. ☐
37. The way we do things around here encourages high performance. ☐
38. Our top management communicates the vision and mission to us. ☐

### Team

39. In my team we will finalise a task even if we experience difficulties. ☐
40. In my team we usually do more than is expected of us. ☐
41. In my team we adapt to changes. ☐
42. In my team we cooperate willingly with other teams to achieve our goals. ☐
43. My team conducts their work in an orderly manner. ☐
44. In my team we do what is expected of us, we are dependable. ☐
45. In my team we do what we promise to do. ☐
46. My team can be described as a well organised team. ☐
47. My team continuously strives to improve performance in line with our business objectives. ☐
48. In my team people take personal ownership of their job responsibilities. ☐
49. I have the support of my team members to do my job effectively. ☐
50. In my team we operate in line with the organisational strategy. ☐